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# The Story of Fort Myers: the history of the Land of the Caloosahatchee and Southwest Florida

Karl H. Grismer

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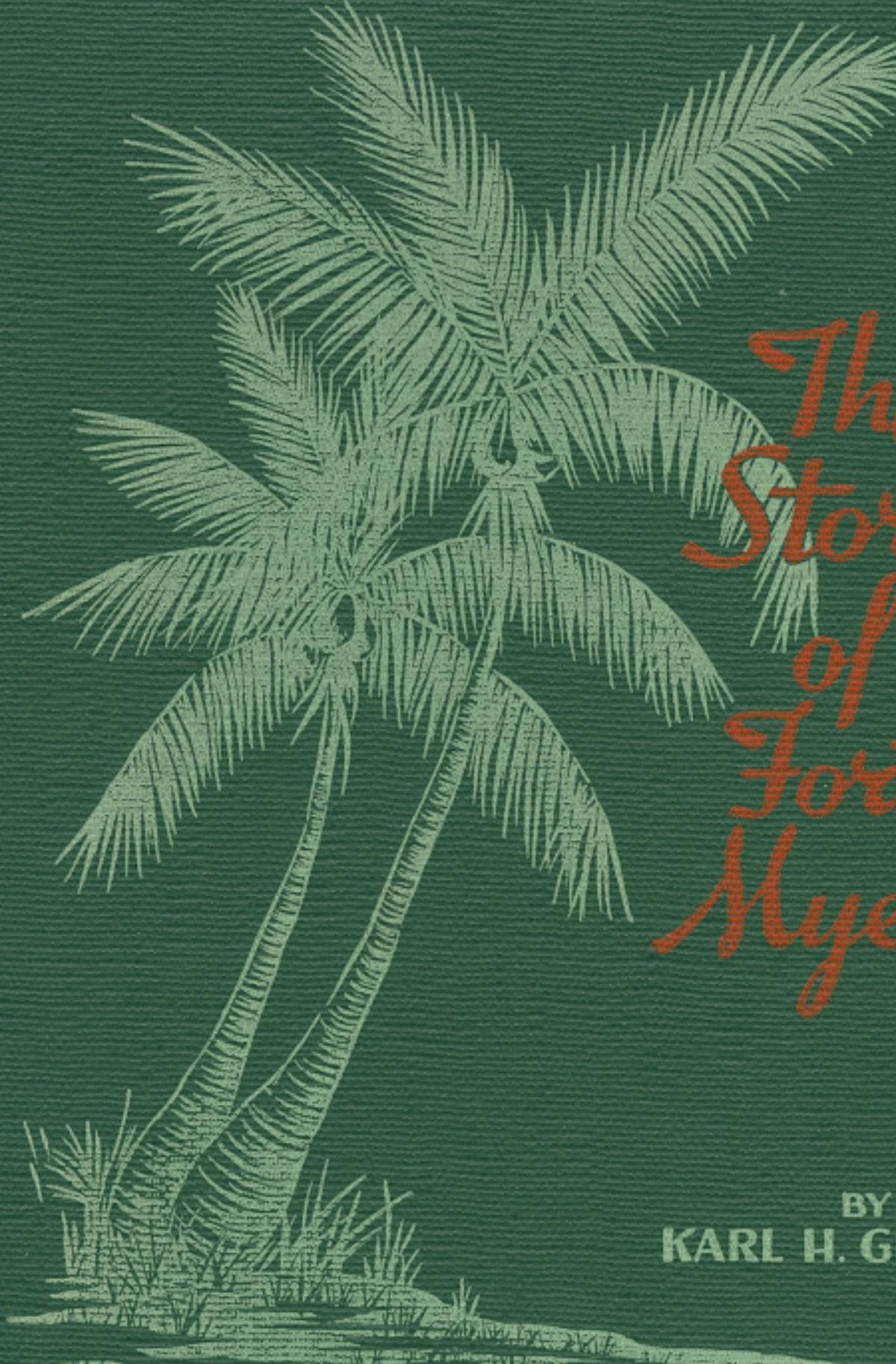
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*The  
Story  
of  
Fort  
Myers*

BY  
**KARL H. GRISMER**

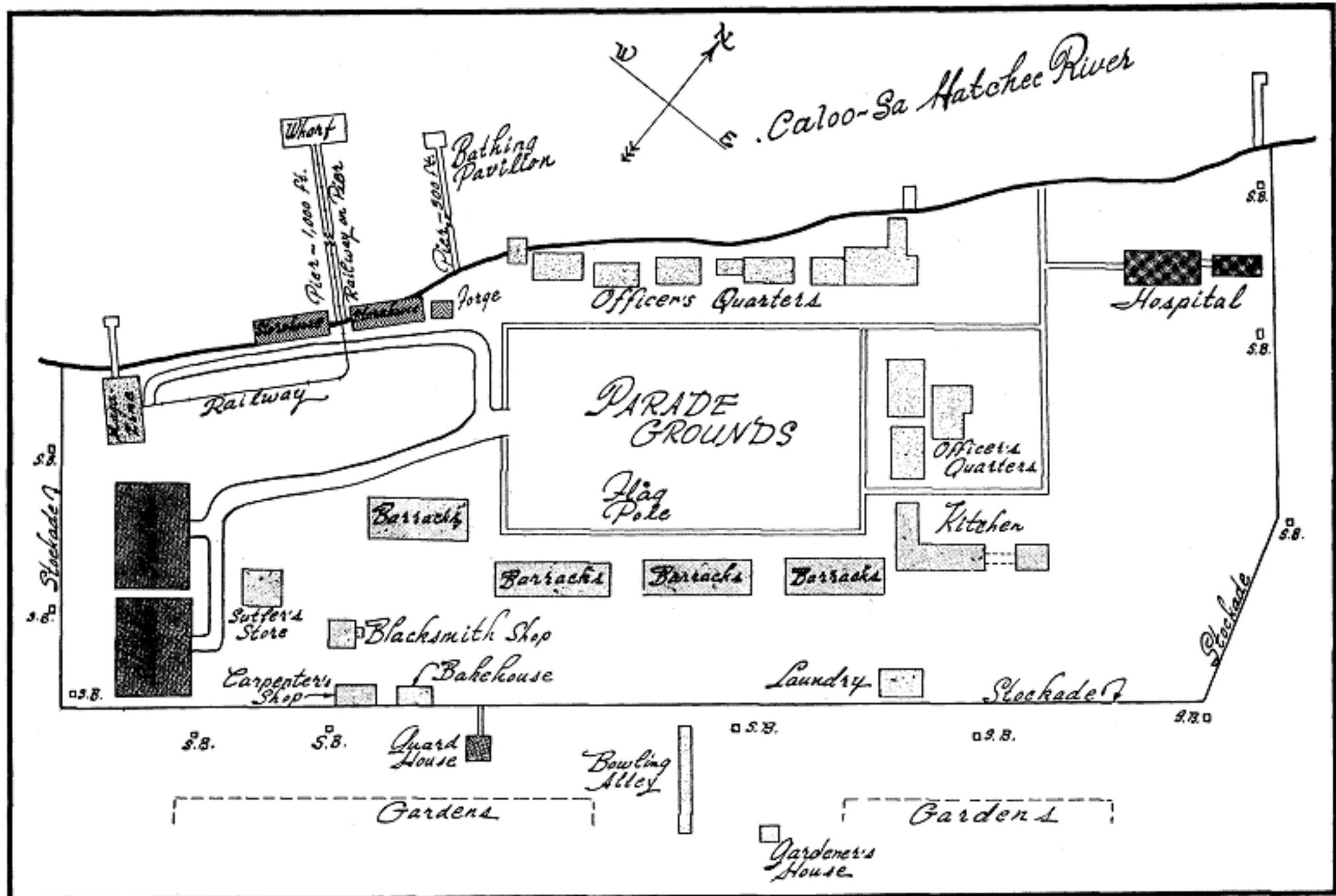
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Other Books by the Author:

History of St. Petersburg (1924)  
The History of Kent, Ohio  
The Story of Sarasota  
The Story of St. Petersburg

# The Story of Fort Myers





Redrawn from an old Army map by Ben E. Cothorn

MAP OF FORT MYERS AS IT WAS IN 1856—During the last years of the Seminole War Fort Myers was one of the largest forts in South Florida. Various buildings in the fort are shown on this map, originally drawn for Capt. Winfield Scott Hancock in 1856. Sentry boxes near the stockade are indicated by "S. B." The 1,000-foot pier was located close to the present Hendry Street and the hospital just west of the present Fowler.

# The Story of Fort Myers

The History of the Land of the Caloosahatchee  
and Southwest Florida

*by Karl H. Grismer*

Published by the St. Petersburg Printing Company, Inc., Florida  
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## CHAPTER I

### IN THE DAYS OF THE CALOOSAS

THE WIND BLEW with savage, relentless fury. Its dreadful moaning increased with each passing hour. The last blue patch had vanished from the sky the day before. Now the whole world had turned an ominous, leaden gray—the churning sea, the sky above and the blinding rain. No horizon could be seen. The sky and sea and rain merged together into an enveloping shroud which seemed to forebode the coming of death.

Far out in the Gulf, a Spanish caravel sailing from Cartagena to Spain was caught in the hurricane. The hold of the ship was filled with silver from the mines of Potosi and gold and jewels from looted temples of the Incas. There were passengers on board. Men, women and children from the New World who had sailed a week before with joyful expectations of meeting again old friends in Spain.

When the storm struck, the captain of the caravel tried to keep his ship close to the other vessels of the fleet. But the companion ships disappeared during the night and when dawn came the caravel was alone on the raging sea. The rigging had been blown away and the rudder smashed beyond repair. The ship ran like a hunted thing before the wind, uncontrolled and uncontrollable.

Hours passed. Then, above the moaning of the hurricane, the captain heard the roar of surf. An instant later the ship hit bottom with a sickening crash. Its keel broke and water poured into the hold from every side. Another wave, and the ship was flung upon the shore. Following waves pounded it apart. Passengers and members of the crew were hurled into the foaming, surging maelstrom. To most of them, death came quickly. Only a few survived. They floundered ashore, threw themselves onto the rain soaked sand, and lay there, gasping for breath.

The wind died down during the following night and at dawn there was not a cloud in the sky. The sun came up in blazing splendor. And with the sun came almost naked Indians from out of the mangrove swamps close by the beach. They herded together the half-drowned, helpless survivors and took them away. Then they returned to prowl around the broken ship.

Gold ingots and silver bars, half buried in the sand, were contemptuously laid aside to be taken last because they were considered of little value. But the barrels and boxes of food, and casks of wines, were carefully carried away. So were articles of clothing and all kinds of metal objects—kitchen utensils, flagons, cutlery, ornaments, silver plate and crucifixes. Particularly, knives and swords and daggers. And jewels

which sparkled in the sunshine as the Indians cascaded them through their hands.

All morning long the wreckage was combed. Then the savages went away, leaving behind the stripped bodies of the drowned victims of the storm. No sooner had the last of the Indians gone than flocks of buzzards volplaned down to pick the corpses clean. On the following day there were only skeletons on the beach—skeletons and the battered hull of the once-proud caravel.

All this happened more than four hundred years ago, during the fall of 1545, on the coast of southern Florida. Many other Spanish ships had been similarly wrecked before and many more were to be wrecked later. This particular wreck was noteworthy, however, because one of the survivors was a bright young lad named Fontaneda. To be exact, Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda.

Only thirteen years old, Fontaneda was the son of an influential Spanish official in Cartegena, in what is now Colombia. With a brother he was on his way to Spain to be educated when the storm occurred. They were taking with them \$25,000 in gold which was lost in the wreck. The brother drowned.

Fontaneda was held captive for seventeen years. He was a friendly youngster and the chief of the tribe took a liking to him. He was permitted to go almost anywhere he wanted to go and do anything he wanted to do. He learned the language of the Indians who had captured him and also the languages of the natives living in three adjoining provinces, which he visited. As a result, he acquired a wide and comprehensive knowledge of the customs of the various tribes and of the land they occupied.

When he gained his freedom, about 1562, Fontaneda returned to Spain and a few years later served as interpreter for Menendez when the latter first visited the Florida West Coast. Back in Spain again in 1574, Fontaneda wrote down his recollections in a Memoir which is still considered the best existing description of Florida as it was in the sixteenth century.

Fontaneda undoubtedly spent much of his time in southwest Florida. Perhaps he once tramped over the ground on which Fort Myers is now located. In all events, we are indebted to him for much of our knowledge regarding the first known "residents" of the region of the Caloosahatchee.

#### *Carlos Ruled a Vast Domain*

Cacique Carlos—that's what Fontaneda called the chief of the tribe which held him captive. The tribe which dominated all other tribes in south Florida during the sixteenth century, and for many years thereafter.

"Carlos" may not have been the real name of the chief. More likely than not, it wasn't. But that is what the name sounded like to Fontaneda's Spanish ears, and that was the way he wrote it. And the name stuck. Today it is perpetuated in the place name San Carlos Bay, where the

water of the Caloosahatchee meets the Gulf; also, in the names "Big Carlos Pass" and "Little Carlos Pass."

Fontaneda called the tribe which Carlos ruled the Carlos Indians. The real name for them was "Calos"—the same word with the "r" left out. Calos is said to be an abbreviation of the Choctaw words kala lu-sa, meaning strong and black. Fontaneda said the meaning of "Carlos" was "brave and skillful, as indeed the Carlos Indians are."

From kala lu-sa probably comes the name Caloosa, or Calusa, by which the tribe was known until it became extinct, a little more than a hundred years ago. The name survives in Caloosahatchee which means, of course, the river of the Caloosas, "hatchee" signifying river.

Regardless of what Carlos' real name might have been, he was every inch a leader. Nearly six feet tall, he was heavy-boned and broad-shouldered and he walked with the easy grace of a panther. His sinewy arms appeared to be perfectly capable of paddling a canoe all day without tiring. His dark eyes, almost jet black, were keen and piercing. They were the eyes of an alert and intelligent man, one not easily deceived.

Carlos, the first outstanding "native son" in the history of Florida, was born to rule. And he did, imperiously. He exacted tribute from all the neighboring tribes just as his father, Senquene, had done before him. The territory he dominated extended as far north on the West Coast as Tampa Bay in the province of the powerful chief Tocobago; around Lake Okeechobee, called the Lake of Mayaimi "because it is very large," and on the East Coast through the lands of the Tequesta and the Ais, extending from the Florida keys north to Cape Canaveral.

The various tribes spoke slightly different languages but they undoubtedly all belonged to the speech group known as the Muskogean. It is generally believed that they came originally from South or Central America. They may have fled from Mexico to escape from the vicious, conquering Aztecs. Perhaps they came to south Florida by following the coast line of the Gulf of Mexico.

No one knows for sure what paths were followed by these nomads of the bygone past and neither does any one know when they came. The most common guess is that they arrived about a thousand years ago, about the time Leif Ericson left Iceland with his Norsemen and went across the bleak Atlantic to discover the land he called Vinland. The Norsemen were fair-skinned men while the Caloosas and their brethren were dark, but they all had the same urge to seek new lands. And they found them—on the same continent.

Arriving in Florida, the newcomers scattered. Many settled along the coasts; others went into the Glades country, particularly along the edge of Lake Okeechobee; some went into the Big Cypress, and still others continued on to the Florida keys.

Finding little need for clothes, they went almost naked. The men wore only loin-cloths made of plaited palmetto strips, fastened to a belt

of deer skin. The women wore short skirts made of the strands of moss they found hanging on the trees, not because of modesty but for comfort. Above the waist they wore nothing—being savages, they saw no need for concealing the human body.

Wherever they went, they found plenty to eat, at all seasons of the year. The fresh water lakes and streams were alive with enormous trout and bass, catfish and bream, all easily driven into traps. Besides fish, there were toothsome young alligators, savory rattlesnakes and moccasins, and juicy eels “as long as a man and as thick as a thigh.” And turtles large and small, all equally delicious.

The newcomers also soon learned that the low koonti bush had starchy roots which, when dried and ground into flour, could be used to make excellent bread. Moreover, they found a tuber, the mud potato, which tasted sweet and was sustaining. They also learned that the hearts of the cabbage palm were tender and nourishing and that even the black berries of the palmettoes could be eaten. And the wild grapes, and bitterish coco plums.

Everywhere—in the hammocks of the Glades country and in the forests on dryer land—the savages found game. Elusive deer, best shot at night when their eyes could be blinded by the light from blazing torches; gray and fox squirrels, the first game killed by growing boys when learning to use their bows and arrows; savage bears which fought with tooth and claw when cornered; snarling panthers, dangerous to hunt but whose pelts made ideal coverings on chilly nights. And birds of infinite variety, good not only for food but for their feathers of brilliant hues, prized by the braves because of the gay touch they added to their lofty headdresses.

Along the coasts, life was even easier than inland, if that were possible. Here they had not only the game of the mainland forests but also limitless quantities of fish—fish which came in enormous schools. Mullet, red fish, sheepshead, trout, pompano, and many, many others, in unbelievable numbers. To simplify the task of getting the fish needed, the Caloosas soon devised nets, making them out of the wire-like vines which tripped unwary feet. And before long the Caloosas began using fishhooks, becoming Florida's first anglers.

When the Caloosas wanted a change of diet, they turned to shell-fish. Oysters, scallops and clams were everywhere and the supply was inexhaustible. Heaping basketsful of them could be obtained merely by walking out into the shallow water of bays and bayous and picking them up.

The Caloosas highly prized the conchs of infinitely varied shapes and sizes. They ate the flesh inside and then used the flintlike shells in making weapons and tools. Ingeniously, they fashioned them into hammers and axes, spear points and arrow points, drinking cups and bowls, scoops for digging up the ground, chisels and adzes, fishhooks and net sinkers—all sorts of things. Infinite patience and more than a little craftsmanship were needed to grind the hard shell with stone and

sand, but the Caloosas had both. Proof that they did is furnished in a most interesting collection of their handiwork which can be seen at the Bradenton Museum.

Because the Caloosas ate huge quantities of oysters, clams and conchs we have mute evidence of their existence in the refuse heaps called kitchen middens which still dot the shores of keys and rivers. With the passing centuries the refuse mounds sometimes became of enormous size, covering acres and rising fifty feet or more in height.

In the lower levels of the kitchen middens human bones often have been found. Later, however, when the Caloosas began to sense that more attention should be given to their dead, they built mounds for use solely as burial places, using whatever material was close at hand—shell, sand or loam.

Of all the mounds left by the Caloosas, the burial mounds are of the most interest to present-day ethnologists, anthropologists, and archeologists. In addition to skeletons, many objects of priceless value have been found in them—pieces of carefully molded pottery, sometimes colored and decorated with feathered lines; delicately designed ornaments which once adorned the necks of Caloosa maidens; finely carved and highly polished hairpins made from bone; shining shell pendants which once hung from the belts of Caloosa braves, and many other objects which tell better than the written word of the skill and culture of the vanished race.

Skeletons found in the mounds prove conclusively that the Caloosas were not giants, as has so often been said. Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, of the Smithsonian Institution, one of the world's most famous anthropologists, examined the skeletal remains in scores of mounds on the Florida West Coast in 1918 and came to the conclusion that the Caloosas were strong and big people but that "measurements of the long bones failed to disclose a single six-footer." He dismissed oft-repeated reports of the finding of eight-foot skeletons as wild exaggerations.

Kitchen middens and burial mounds were not the only mounds left by the Caloosas. Many were built to provide places of refuge when the water ran high, during the hurricane season along the coast and during the rainy season along the rivers and in the Glades. Such mounds often were fifteen feet or more above the surrounding country, plenty high enough for the Indians to live in safety when the strong winds blew or rain came in torrents. On such mounds the Indians built many of their homes, of logs and thatched palmetto leaves.

Mounds also were built to serve as observation points. Atop these mounds the Caloosas kept a constant lookout and when an enemy was sighted, signal fires were lighted. Smoke from them could be seen for miles. The fires also were used for transmitting messages and in a matter of hours important news could be flashed across the peninsula or a hundred miles up or down the coast. Spaniards learned this later on, often to their sorrow.

The most elaborate of all the mounds made by the Caloosas were those built for holding religious ceremonies. There were at least two such mounds on the West Coast, one on Pine Island and the other on Marco. The tops of these mounds towered high above the Gulf and were separated from the beach by terraces and plazas. Ramps led up to the summits. Canals ending in courts were dug out to bays and bayous. To prevent dirt from washing into the canals and filling them up, the Caloosas bordered them with walls made of palmetto logs and shells.

The Pine Island and Marco mounds were examined by Frank Hamilton Cushing, nationally known ethnologist, in 1895 and 1896. At the latter place particularly he made discoveries which amazed the scientific world.

Dr. Cushing made his excavations under the greatest difficulties. The rainy season had set in and the heat and mosquitoes were almost unbearable. To continue work he had to build smudge fires all around him and stay in the pungent smoke. But, persevering, he succeeded in unearthing scores of priceless objects—human masks, animal figures, plaques, pendants, war clubs, ornaments of many kinds, pottery bowls and cooking pots, bone fishhooks, sharktooth knives, and many kinds of tools. When first taken out of the muck, the carved wooden pieces showed their original paint. But when the pieces were exposed to light and air, the colors quickly faded and the wood itself began to disintegrate. However, Dr. Cushing managed to save some of the best pieces by wrapping them in damp cloths. Scientists later said that the carving on them was finer than the work of any other eastern Indians.

Besides being mound builders, the Caloosas were canal diggers. The canals were dug, perhaps by slaves, to permit the widest possible use of canoes. Traces of some of the canals can still be seen on islands along the coasts, extending from the open sea to inner bays and channels. Traces of others can be found far inland. Perhaps the longest of any of the canals was one designated on the Zachary Taylor map of Florida made in 1839. Between Lake Okeechobee and Lake Hicpochee, near the source of the Caloosahatchee, the map maker drew two lines and under them wrote the words "Old Canal." If the canal was old in 1839, when Americans first penetrated the interior, it probably was a left-over from Caloosa days.

It's more than possible that this old canal was used by Chief Carlos in the sixteenth century in going from one part of his domain to another. He had need for it when he went to Lake Okeechobee where, according to Fontaneda, he ruled over "many towns of thirty or forty inhabitants each and many more places where only a few people lived." Carlos' subjects in that region paid him tribute with koonti flour and if they failed to supply him with the quantity he desired, there is little doubt but that he went and got what he wanted.

Carlos also could have used the canal to advantage, and probably did, when he journeyed over to the East Coast to receive or exact tribute from the Ais Indians. Fontaneda reports one such trip. He said that the

Caloosas armed themselves, went to the coast of Ais, and returned with great treasure. The treasure referred to was that taken by the Ais from a wrecked Spanish ship. Fontaneda said it amounted to two million dollars or more "in silver and gold and in articles of jewelry made by Mexican Indians which the passengers (of the Spanish ship) were bringing with them." Fontaneda said that Carlos took what he pleased, "or the best part," of the treasure and divided the remainder with the other rulers of his domain.

How often Carlos went to the East Coast and how he traveled from the eastern shore of Lake Okeechobee to the Atlantic are purely matters of conjecture. So is the exact location of Carlos' main settlement. However, most authorities agree that the settlement was located on or near the Caloosahatchee. It may have been on Pine Island where the great ceremonial mound was located or it may have been near the present town of Fort Myers. That is quite possible. Old timers say there were formerly many large mounds close to the present city. They were leveled to get shell for sidewalks and streets and no trace of them remains.

Although Fontaneda did not specify the town where Carlos lived he did give a list of the towns which were under his control. The meanings of some of the names were added later by students of the Choctaw language to which the names had a similarity.

The list included: Tampa, a large town, (but not the Tampa of today); Tuchie, believed to be "pouch"; Soco, "muscadine grape"; No, which signifies town beloved; Sinapa, "snake eaters"; Sinaesta; Metamapo, "bears the bowl"; Sacaspada; Calaobe, "spring that is deep," Estame; Yagua; Guevu; Muspa, called on Herrera's map, "Pta de muspa"; Comachia; Quisiyove; Cutespa; Tavaguemue; Tomsobe, "shallow tailed hawk" and Enempa, "we eat." Fontaneda said there were twenty other towns the names of which he could not remember. However, he added the names of two towns on the Florida keys: Guarungune, "the town of weeping," and Cuchiyyaga, "the place where there has been suffering."

Those place names furnish practically all the known words of the Caloosa tongue. Fontaneda gave just one other word: "Se-le-te-ga." He said it meant: "Run to the lookout; see if there are any people coming." And he added, needlessly enough: "The people of Florida abbreviate their words more than we do."

Fontaneda said that "se-le-te-ga" was used one day when he told Carlos that Christian captives were being killed by their guards without reason. Carlos replied that they were killed because they were rebellious and would not do what they were told. Fontaneda retorted that the reason they didn't obey orders was that they did not know the Caloosa language. To test the truth of Fontaneda's statement, Carlos turned to a nearby group of captives and yelled: "se-le-te-ga." They made no sign that they understood. Carlos then was convinced that Fontaneda was right and he issued orders that thereafter no captive should be ordered to do anything unless an interpreter was present. As a result

of this order, Fontaneda said, the lives of many Christians were saved.

This incident, related at great length by Fontaneda, furnishes some proof that Carlos was not as cruel and heartless as many other Spaniards, particularly Menendez, said he was. It also shows that Carlos was a man who could be reasoned with and who would change his mind when proven wrong. Furthermore, it indicates that Carlos did not kill Christians without what seemed to him good reasons.

No mention is made by Fontaneda anywhere in his long narrative of his having seen or heard of any Christian being tortured or sacrificed to Caloosa gods. Fontaneda had no love for his captors and in his Memoir recommended that the Caloosas should all be captured, taken to the West Indies and used as slaves. It seems incomprehensible, therefore, that Fontaneda failed to mention Christians being sacrificed, if sacrificed they were. Perhaps Carlos wasn't as bad as he was painted.

However, there is no doubt but that Carlos hated and mistrusted the Spaniards. He had reason to. He knew how his people had been enslaved by the Spaniards in the past. And perhaps he had a premonition of what his own fate was going to be. And that of his son.

### *Slave Ships Came to Raid*

The Spanish conquerors and exploiters of the New World have been called, and probably rightly, the worst murderers in the history of mankind.

When Columbus made his great discovery in 1492, the islands of the West Indies were thickly populated by natives called the Arawaks and Caribs. Ruthlessly and viciously, the Spaniards killed them. Some they killed in battle; others by torture, and many, many more by working them endless hours as slaves under the pitiless, blazing sun.

Island after island became depopulated. It is estimated that by 1520 at least a million natives had been killed in Haiti, Puerto Rico and Cuba. How many more were killed on other islands no one knows. The Spaniards didn't bother to keep track of the number of their victims.

As an inevitable result of the extermination of the native population, a labor shortage soon developed. To get replacements, the Spaniards made raids on islands which had not yet been exploited. The natives were hunted down, captured, and brought in chains to the mines and fields. But they died like flies, from overwork, disease and homesickness.

Among the islands raided were those of the Bahamas where the docile and friendly natives had first greeted Columbus by bringing him gifts of fruits and cassava bread, and trinkets, and a little gold and silver. Now they were repaid by being carried off to die as slaves.

After the Bahamas had been stripped of human beings, the slavers quite probably turned to the Florida keys and to the mainland of Florida.

The fact that there is no record of these slaving expeditions means nothing. For various reasons the slavers did not care to publicize such activities. To escape paying a license fee to the crown and high custom duties on slaves brought in to Hispaniola, they operated as smugglers, sneaking cautiously through the islands with their human cargoes.

The slave ships probably reached the mainland of Florida early in the sixteenth century. The Tequestas and the Caloosas may have been warned of their coming. The sea-going canoes of the Indians which slipped along the coasts and into the West Indies may have brought word of the slaving expeditions and the cruelties of the Spaniards as well. Such news traveled with amazing speed.

Even if they were forewarned, however, the Florida Indians could not have guarded both coasts. Undoubtedly the slavers crept in again and again, captured shiploads of men and women in battle or through trickery, and were off again before reinforcements could be sent in to repel the raids.

As stated before, there is no existing record of such raids. But it is a known fact that both coasts of Florida were examined and charted before 1502. Because in that year the famous Cantino map was published—a map which shows the Florida coastlines with remarkable accuracy. It is more than likely that data for the map was provided by pilots of the slaving ships.

Slave raids also would explain the fact that when Florida was "discovered" in 1513 by Juan Ponce de Leon, he was met by an aroused and fighting people, the Caloosas, ready to battle him to the death.

Photo  
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available

*Ponce de Leon Tried to Conquer*

Ferdinand, king of Spain, was a covetous man. As a result of Spanish conquests in the New World he was rapidly becoming rich and powerful. But he yearned for even more riches. He listened attentively, therefore, to a tale told to him at his court in Burgos early in 1512 by Juan Ponce de Leon, famous soldier and administrator of conquered lands.

Juan's tale was interesting indeed. North of the island of Cuba, he told the king, there was another island he had heard about from the natives of Hispaniola. It was called Bimini. Gold was there in abundance and silver too. And precious gems. And spices and rare woods. It was a truly wonderful place—a paradise on earth.

Perhaps Juan Ponce told Ferdinand even more. Perhaps he leaned forward and, speaking softly so that others could not hear, repeated a legend he had heard in Hispaniola about a marvelous river in Bimini. A river whose waters would restore youth to those who bathed in it! A veritable Fountain of Youth! A fountain which would make a man strong again and virile!

If Juan Ponce told the king all this, and the chances are he did, Ferdinand was no doubt fascinated. He was sixty years old and possibly in dire need of a youth elixir.

Be all that as it may, Ferdinand did not dilly-dally in granting Ponce de Leon a patent to conquer and exploit the island of Bimini. The document was signed February 23, 1512. It was relatively short and business-like. It detailed carefully the share that Ferdinand was to get of all the treasure found and how all captured slaves should be divided. It also stipulated that Juan Ponce should shoulder all the expenses of the expedition and take all the risk. Ferdinand, as usual, risked nothing.

Ponce de Leon, however, was satisfied with the arrangement. The conquering of Bimini, with all its richness and Fountain of Youth besides, would be a fitting climax to his long and spectacular career. And to a bloody, ruthless career as well.

Born in San Servas, Province of Campos, Kingdom of Leon, about 1460, he took part in the Moorish wars and then sailed with Columbus on his second voyage to the New World in 1493. During the years which followed he made an impressive record in capturing and killing natives. His feats were so outstanding that by 1506 he was made administrator of Haiti. Three years later he was made the first governor of Puerto Rico. There he became rich. His great plantation returned huge profits. The soil was fertile and labor cost him nothing. He worked his slaves pitilessly. When they died, he had them buried where they fell. When they fled to the hills, he sent his ferocious fighting dogs after them. He considered that great sport.

All that was temporarily ended for Juan Ponce in 1512. As a result of a change in power of the factions which controlled the royal court in Spain, he had lost his job as governor of Puerto Rico. It was then that he returned to his native land, had his interview with Ferdinand, and

secured the grant to conquer Bimini. With the grant he also regained his position as Puerto Rico governor. So he went back to the island and spent the next year collecting his fleet, and men, and supplies for the Bimini expedition.

Many writers have scoffed at the report that Juan Ponce hoped to find a Fountain of Youth. They say he wanted only more gold and glory, that he was vigorous and healthy and had no need of a youth restorative. But the fact remains that he had passed the half-century mark. He was fifty-two years old in 1512 and had led a strenuous life. What more natural, therefore, than that he should have begun to realize that the fires of youth were dying down? And that he should have given heed to the tales of Bimini's Fountain of Youth then being told by the natives of Hispaniola?

Detailed reference to the miracle-water legend was made by Fontaneda in his Memoir written in 1574, some sixty years after Juan Ponce's voyage of discovery. He related that in ancient times many Indians from Cuba had come to Florida in search of a river he called the Jordan which would "turn aged men and women back to their youth" and that descendants of those Indians still lived in Florida while he was held there as a prisoner.

He also stated that Florida Indians also believed such a river existed and searched everywhere for it. "So earnestly did they engage in the pursuit," he wrote, "that there remained not a river in all Florida . . . in which they did not bathe and to this day they persist in seeking that water."

The name of Juan Ponce was linked definitely with the legend by Fontaneda who undoubtedly was told by the Caloosas that the conquistador had sought the river. He wrote: "Juan Ponz de Leon . . . went to Florida in search of the River Jordan . . . that he might become young from bathing in such a stream." He added that "it is cause for merriment" that Juan Ponce should have had such an object. But while Fontaneda ridiculed Juan Ponce he naively admitted that during the seventeen years he was held captive in Florida he bathed in many streams "but to my misfortune I never came upon the River Jordan."

Regardless of whether Ponce de Leon sought the Fountain of Youth or not, he sailed from Puerto Rico with three ships on March 3, 1513. He did not discover Florida on Easter Sunday, as the history books used to say. Easter came on March 27 in 1513 and on that day his fleet was some four hundred miles from the Florida coast. Not until about April 2 did he sight land and come ashore, probably about eighteen miles north of St. Augustine. But it was still during the Easter season. Herrera wrote: "They named it 'La Florida' because they discovered it in the time of the flowery festival." Thus Florida got its name.

Juan Ponce saw no Indians at the time he first landed. But the ever watchful natives probably sighted him. And it is quite likely that they kept their eyes on him as he re-embarked and sailed south along the coast. Word of his presence and the course of his southward journey

probably was signalled far into the interior of the peninsula. The hated white man was back again!

Be that as it may, Juan Ponce met with opposition when he next tried to make a landing, somewhere near Indian River Inlet. Hostile natives were there to meet him, with bows and arrows and shell-pointed spears. Three Spaniards were wounded in the clash—the first white men known to have shed blood on Florida soil, the first to suffer in what was to be a three century conflict to wrest the peninsula from the people who called it home.

Proceeding on their way, the Spaniards went along the Florida keys, then westward to the Dry Tortugas, and then northward again to the Florida coast. On May 24 they made their first landing on the Florida West Coast, in the land of the Caloosas.

The exact location of that landing place has been debated by historians for years. However, much of the doubt has been removed through the discovery of an Italian map drawn by Ottomanno Freducci in 1514 or 1515, obviously made from Ponce de Leon's charts. A study of this map indicates that the landing was made at the head of the Ten Thousand Islands about sixty miles south of Fort Myers. There the ship "San Christoval" was careened so that its barnacle-laden hull could be cleaned and made fit for going to sea again.

Ten days later a small force of Caloosas appeared to reconnoiter. There was a brief fracas and the Spaniards captured four of the natives. The next day a larger force appeared. And then an extraordinary thing occurred. One of the natives came forward to talk to the Spaniards. He spoke in Spanish! Juan Ponce was astounded, and well he might be. For a man to discover a new country and then have a native speak to him in the discoverer's own language would be disconcerting indeed. The Spaniards surmised that the Indian must have come from the West Indies. If so, he undoubtedly brought word of the Spanish cruelties in the islands. Little wonder, then, that the Caloosas failed to extend a warm and friendly welcome to Juan Ponce.

The Spanish-speaking native told Juan Ponce that his chief wished to bring gold in order to trade. But even while he spoke, twenty Indian war canoes dashed out from shore. They seized the anchor cables and tried to raise the anchor. A brisk wind was blowing from the Gulf and the Caloosas evidently hoped to make the ship drift to shore where they would destroy it. But their efforts failed. An armed Spanish bark bore in among the light canoes and the Caloosas were forced to flee. They left behind five of their canoes and a number of their warriors who had been killed.

In the skirmish a Spaniard was mortally wounded. Two arrows penetrated his armor and he bled to death. Who he was or where he came from is not known. It doesn't matter. Many more were to share his fate in years to come.

On the following day the Spaniards sounded a nearby harbor and landed. Soon they were again attacked, this time by eighty Indians. The

Caloosas did not have a chance. Their bows and arrows were ineffective weapons compared with the deadly Spanish crossbows, to say nothing of artillery which the Spaniards turned against them. The battle lasted all day. Many Indians were slain, so many that the Spaniards named the island Mantanza "from the Indians that they killed."

The Caloosas were defeated, but they were not conquered. Their will to fight was not broken. It never was! They loved their homeland better than life itself and they fought valiantly to protect it. The Spaniards never were able to establish a permanent settlement or mission anywhere in Caloosa territory.

Juan Ponce remained in the vicinity of Mantanza twenty-one days, from May 24 to June 14. During that period he explored far into the interior, searching for gold and silver and precious gems. Also, perhaps, for the Fountain of Youth. But he found nothing. That is, nothing worth taking. Magnificent forests were there, true enough, and countless acres of fertile land. But what did Ponce de Leon care for fertile lands or forests? He wanted riches he could seize and carry away. But such treasure he could not find.

Three months had passed since Ponce de Leon left Puerto Rico. His supplies were running short. So, reluctantly, he raised his sails and headed back toward the Dry Tortugas where the Spaniards filled their larder with turtles, manatee, pelicans and terns. Not the best of eating, perhaps, but nourishing.

The months of July and August were spent in search for gold and silver in the Florida keys, the lower East Coast and the Bahamas, but no treasure was found. And everywhere the natives were so crafty and such valiant fighters that they could not be captured and enslaved.

Juan Ponce returned to Puerto Rico on September 23. His long journey of exploration had proven fruitless. He was discouraged but not ready to give up. Eight years were to pass, however, before he returned to Florida.

Back in Puerto Rico, Juan Ponce added yearly to his wealth. His immense plantation and great herds of cattle returned him lush profits. He also had a tidy income from his position as governor of the island, which he retained. Even so, he was not satisfied. He was convinced that gold could be found in Florida, perhaps far in the interior where he had not explored; mines as rich as any Cortez had just discovered in Mexico. He was determined to find them.

Early in 1521 Juan Ponce began making preparations for the return trip. This time he intended to do a thorough job of exploration. His plans provided for the establishment of a permanent settlement which he could use as a base for operations. He left Puerto Rico February 20, 1521, with two ships, two hundred men, settlers and priests. He also had a herd of swine, fifty horses and many kinds of agricultural implements.

Somewhere on the West Coast, no one knows just where, he found an anchorage. Many historians believe he landed somewhere along the Caloosahatchee. He wanted to explore in the interior and certainly it

was easier to reach the interior by sailing up a river than by marching overland through swamps and forests. And no river could have served his purpose better than the Caloosahatchee, as he quite possibly observed.

The landing place selected, no time was lost in bringing goods and men ashore, small boats shuttling back and forth between the ships and land.

Then, suddenly, there came a rain of arrows from the shadows of the forests. And spears thrown with deadly accuracy. Many of the spears and arrows found their mark and Spaniards fell. Their blood spilled upon the sand. The Spaniards rallied and brought their crossbows and arquebuses into use. But the brown figures of the Caloosas, darting in and out among the trees, made elusive targets. The battle waged for hours.

One of those who fell was the great conquistador, the daring adventurer, Ponce de Leon. A Caloosa arrow penetrated his armor and buried itself deeply in his body. He writhed in pain. Clutching his side, he staggered into a boat and was taken to his ship. And when the last of the survivors came on board, and the anchors were lifted, and the ships sailed down the river, Juan Ponce realized that his dream of conquest had become a nightmare.

Taken ashore at Havana, where his ships went immediately after the battle, Ponce de Leon breathed his last. Instead of getting riches in Florida, he received a mortal wound. Instead of finding the Fountain of Youth, he found death. He died, but the name he gave the land he found, lived on.

#### *Others Came After Juan Ponce*

By mortally wounding Ponce de Leon and thwarting his plans to establish a colony in their land, the Caloosas won an important round in their battle with the treasure-seeking Spaniards. But they had not delivered a knockout punch. Ponce was dead but other Spaniards were to follow him to renew the battle in the quest for riches.

One-eyed, red-headed Panfilo de Narvaez, a grandee like Juan Ponce who had grown rich after years in the New World, came up the West Coast in the spring of 1528 and landed on Good Friday. He and his men hunted fruitlessly for treasure and then proceeded by foot up the peninsula. Indians followed, shooting at them with their deadly arrows. Food was difficult to find and many of Narvaez' followers died from hunger. Finally the desperate adventurers built boats to get away. All the boats were wrecked in storms on the Gulf and only four men out of the four hundred in the expedition managed to reach Mexico and safety.

Eleven years later another ambitious effort to find treasure in Florida was made, this one by Hernando de Soto, who came with a splendid fleet, seven hundred men, and everything needed for establishing a colony. He landed May 30, 1539, and made camp at the village of Ucita, "a town of seven or eight houses." All summer De Soto hunted for

the gold mines of his dreams. Finding nothing, he started northward and then went westward to die on the Mississippi on May 21, 1544.

There is a romantic sequel to the stories of these expeditions. The wife of Narvaez sent a relief ship after him when he failed to return. On the ship was a young fellow named Juan Ortiz. Somewhere on the West Coast Juan saw an Indian waving what appeared to be a letter. Thinking that it might be a message from Narvaez, Juan plunged from the ship and splashed ashore. He was promptly seized and taken to an Indian village where Hirrihigua was chief. Ortiz was ordered burned alive. But when the flames began to sear his body, Hirrihigua's daughter dashed in and pleaded with her father for his life.

The plea was granted and Ortiz was told to stand guard at the Indian cemetery and keep wild animals away. During the first night he saw a wild cat attempting to carry off the body of a child. The stench of decaying corpses had made Ortiz ill but he managed to shoot an arrow and kill the animal. His act was praised by the Indians and for several months no further move was made to harm him.

As autumn drew near, however, the medicine men began to clamor for his life. Again the Indian princess came to his aid. She helped him flee to the village of Chief Mococco to whom she was betrothed. There Ortiz remained until the arrival of the fleet of Hernando de Soto in 1539. Mococco sent Ortiz and nine Indians to contact the Spaniards. They met a party of Spanish horsemen who started to attack furiously. Ortiz attempted to cry out in Spanish but to his horror discovered he had forgotten the language. Finally, in desperation, he managed to gasp "Seville - Seville - Christian - Christian." Saved, he joined De Soto's expedition.

That's the story related at great length by Ortiz himself. It may be true. Anyhow, it is interesting. Particularly so since it parallels almost exactly the story told in 1616 by Captain John Smith regarding his romantic rescue by Pocohontas. Many historians claim that the Ortiz story, published in Portugal in 1557, provided the theme for the Pocohontas tale—that Captain John Smith picked it up and used it to get publicity for his own exploits. He got it.

#### *Where Were the Landings Made?*

Historians have squabbled for years regarding the exact locations of the landing places of Narvaez and De Soto. Furthermore the squabbling probably will continue for years to come, just as it continued for months during 1948 in D. B. McKay's historical column in the Tampa Sunday Tribune. And when all the historians and scholars who contributed articles had had their say, they were as far apart as they were in the beginning.

Inasmuch as De Soto is more renowned than Narvaez, the main argument concerns his landing place. One historian said years ago, apparently without good reason, that the landing was made at Apalachee

Bay. Modern historians, however, agree that it was either in the Tampa Bay area or in the Caloosahatchee-Charlotte Harbor region. But that is where agreement ends. From there on it's a case of every writer for himself, and almost every one has a different opinion.

During the 1930's a four-year study of Spanish records was made by the De Soto Expedition Commission, authorized by Congress, to determine the exact place of landing. The commission's report, made in 1939 by Dr. John R. Swanton of the Smithsonian Institution, gave the nod to Shaw's Point at the mouth of the Manatee River, in Tampa Bay.

The report immensely pleased the people of Sarasota and Manatee counties but was anything but satisfactory to people in other West Coast communities. St. Petersburg insisted that Dr. Swanton got his data all twisted and should have fixed the landing place somewhere on the other side of Tampa Bay, preferably right at the Sunshine City. Tampa contended that De Soto "undoubtedly" landed some place farther up the bay. Punta Gorda argued that all available evidence indicated that the landing was made at Charlotte Harbor.

Fort Myers people of course took part in the dispute. They unanimously declared that De Soto disembarked somewhere in the Caloosahatchee region but they couldn't agree on the exact spot. Some said Estero Island, others Sanibel Island, and still others near Iona. And more than a few argued that De Soto wouldn't have shown good sense if he had selected any spot other than the site of Fort Myers, right at the foot of Hendry Street.

And so the battle raged—and keeps on raging.

There are many good reasons for the diversity of opinion among the historians. Instruments used by the early Spanish seamen were pitifully inaccurate and when the latitude and longitude of a landing place was given it was as apt to be a hundred miles out in the Gulf as somewhere on solid land. Moreover, the early Spanish maps were childishly crude and even the principal indentations along the coast were carelessly given, and haphazardly named. As for detail maps showing the depth of water in channels and bays—there were none.

To add to the confusion, Spanish writers who chronicled the various expeditions were unbelievably vague in their description of localities. Almost any interpretation can be taken from them.

Three different accounts of De Soto's expedition exist. All were written by men who accompanied the conquistador. But the accounts are all different, not only in the description of localities but in almost all other respects as well, even to the number of ships and men in the expeditionary force. To deduce from the writings an argument-proof conclusion as to the landing place is practically impossible.

Mother Nature has added to the difficulty of arriving at a general agreement. During the past four hundred years she has made countless major changes along the coast. Winds and tides have taken sand from one place and dumped it in another. Old passes and channels have been closed and new ones opened. Keys which existed as recently as a hundred

years ago have all but disappeared; others have become much larger. As a result of all this change, the vague descriptions of the Spanish writers become vaguer still; in fact, almost meaningless.

So, to be on the safe side, let us say that Narvaez and De Soto landed somewhere on the West Coast in the land of the Caloosas—and let it go at that.

### *A Hurricane Brings a Treasure Ship*

Carlos was just a child when the first Spanish treasure ship was blown ashore on the lower West Coast.

It had once been a mighty galleon, many decked, with beautifully colored and embroidered sails, and armed with many guns. It was a haughty ship and proud of its strength.

But when Carlos first saw it, piled high on the beach in the wake of a vicious September hurricane, the ship was no longer beautiful or majestic. It was nothing but a twisted mass of wreckage, a torn and battered thing. Its hull had split wide open in many places and the cargo had spilled upon the sand.



Scenes such as this lure winter visitors back to Florida year after year.

The wreck had been spotted at dawn on the day following the storm. News of it spread with lightning speed and Caloosas came from everywhere, some on foot and some in canoes. Stalwart warriors and women with babies on their backs, young bucks and maidens, boys and girls. They all joined in delving through the wreckage with childlike curiosity.

Carlos was thrilled. Never before had he seen so many wonderful things. The first object he picked up was a keen-pointed knife, made from the finest Spanish steel. He fingered its edge, wiped the blade carefully to remove the sand and moisture, and then tucked it in his belt, as any boy would do.

There were bodies on the beach, many bodies. But no living survivors of the storm. Carlos did not join the others in stripping the corpses of their clothing; it was not proper that the son of the Caloosa chief should touch the bodies of the dead.

All day long the Indians continued to take treasures from the wreckage. Kitchen utensils, hatchets and axes, knives and daggers and swords, clothing of all descriptions—those were the things they valued most. Those and the boxes and casks of food—strange food which they tasted cautiously but quickly liked. One unbroken barrel of wine was found. It was opened and everyone drank. Soon all were light headed and gay. Surely this was indeed a treasure ship.

There were many other things in the ship's cargo which pleased the Indians mightily. Bags of emeralds, beautiful rings and bracelets, ornaments of many, many kinds. Silver and gold cups and trays and flagons, candlesticks, tall combs blazing with precious gems, all sorts of pretty objects the Caloosas had never seen before.

However, much of the ship's cargo interested the Indians not a bit—ingots of gold and bars of silver. They were strangely heavy and seemed to have little value. They were thrown carelessly aside or left where they were, half buried in the sand. Years later the Indians learned that the Spaniards prized this stuff more than life itself so they began to salvage it.

Carlos saw many wrecked Spanish treasure ships during the years which followed, so many that he lost track of the number. He did not know it but most of them sailed from Veracruz in Mexico or Cartegena in what is now Colombia, the principal Spanish storage points for treasures looted from the Aztecs and the Incas. Bound for Spain, the ships had to pass through the Florida Straits. There they were often caught in tropical storms, blown far out of their course, and wrecked upon the Florida coasts.

Many Spaniards survived the wrecks. Carlos did not care whether they lived or died, or what became of them. For all Spaniards he held a bitter hatred. His father had told him innumerable times how the slave ships had come to the Caloosa coasts in former years, captured many of his people and taken them away to die in chains. A few of the captives had managed to escape and return to Florida and from them Carlos himself heard their stories of Spanish cruelties. Consequently,

he could well believe that all Spaniards—men, women and children—were demons.

No one knows for sure how the Caloosas treated their Spanish captives. It is a matter of record, however, that many of them escaped or were traded to the Spaniards for Indians the Spaniards captured. It is also known that many Spanish women married Indian men and bore them children and that later when they had an opportunity to rejoin the Spaniards, chose to remain with the Caloosas.

A number of writers have stated that the Caloosas brutally tortured the Christians and sacrificed many of them to their heathen gods. Strangely enough, however, no mention of such sacrifices was made by Fontaneda, held captive by the Caloosas for seventeen years, or by many other Spaniards who later gained their freedom. Most of the stories regarding human sacrifices seem to come from Spaniards who sought to justify their own barbarities by relating how terrible the Caloosas were. Naturally such tales can be given little credence.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that the Caloosas hated the Spaniards and captured as many of them as they could. Such actions pained the Spanish authorities greatly. However, the Spaniards had even a greater pain. The Caloosas, vile fellows that they were, attacked Spaniards who often came to recover treasure contained in wrecks of their treasure ships and prevented them from regaining the loot they had stolen from the Aztecs and the Incas. All this was very, very reprehensible—from a Spanish viewpoint. Obviously, the Spanish trade routes had to be protected. Something had to be done.

But what that something should be was a debatable question. The Spaniards had learned to their sorrow that the Caloosas could not be easily conquered. And to send in a force large enough to exterminate them would be an extremely dangerous and costly undertaking. What's more, the direct returns would be nil. It wouldn't pay even to capture the Caloosas and use them as slaves—they were too proud to submit to slavery and when put in chains, quickly died. Yes, Caloosa slaves were almost worthless. Negro slaves brought from Africa were infinitely more valuable. They were more docile and lived remarkably long even when forced to work unbelievably long hours under the pitiless sun.

The Caloosa problem was a thorny one for Spanish authorities for many years. It was so thorny that they finally consented to listen to pleas of the Catholic clergy for permission to try to convert the savages. For years the Catholic Church had protested against the Spanish outrages in the New World but the protests had fallen on deaf ears. But now the situation was different. Perhaps it might pay after all to treat the Florida Indians decently. If the heathens could be converted and taught to let other people's property alone—fine. It was worth taking a chance on anyhow.

So it was that the first missionaries came to Florida. These men were true Christians. They differed from the conquistadors in every way. They were humble and considerate, not arrogant and cruel. They

sought to teach Christianity by kindly deeds, not by brutality. They were good men, sincere in their beliefs and also brave.

Such a man was the Dominican friar, Father Luis de Cancer Barbastro, more commonly known as Father Cancer. Accompanied by three other priests, he sailed from Veracruz in 1549, intent upon founding a mission in Florida. It is believed that his ship, which carried neither arms or soldiers, anchored somewhere between the Caloosahatchee River and Tampa Bay.

The Indians had no way of knowing that Father Cancer and his companions were totally unlike the marauders, slavehunters and conquistadors who had preceded them. So they took no chances. When Father Cancer landed on the beach and prayed, the Indians clubbed him to death. Two other priests were captured. The ship returned to Mexico.

No further attempt to convert the Florida Indians was made for years. And the Caloosa problem remained unsolved.

### *The French Brought More Trouble*

Had it not been for pirates and the French, the Spaniards might have left the Caloosas in undisputed possession of South Florida indefinitely after the slaying of Father Cancer. They might have decided it would be cheaper in the long run to let the Indians have a ship's treasure now and then than to try to conquer them—or even convert them.

But pirates of all nationalities began taking a heavy toll of Spanish shipping about 1545. Moreover, they had the temerity even to attack, ravish and plunder a number of towns on the Spanish Main. They not only took Spanish lives but Spanish treasure as well, and that was inexcusable.

To make matters worse, French Huguenots boldly sailed across the Atlantic in 1562 and established a fort and colony at Fort Royal, in what is now South Carolina. Spanish officialdom was incensed and alarmed. The French had no right to come anywhere in North America—the Pope had given it all to Spain. Once before the French had disregarded the Papal Bull when they explored the St. Lawrence region. Then, the Spaniards did not strenuously object because they considered the bleak St. Lawrence of little value. But this latest action of the French was a far more serious matter. With the French at Port Royal, the Spanish shipping route would be endangered.

To remove the menace, a Spanish ship was sent from Havana. But before it reached Port Royal, the French had departed for France, having run out of supplies. The menace had vanished, but not for long. Within less than two years the French Huguenots were back again. And this time they settled even farther south, at Fort Caroline, close to the mouth of the St. Johns River. Pirates soon began using the port as a rendezvous.

Spanish officials were now truly alarmed. The Spanish shipping lanes were more seriously threatened than before. But there was also an even greater danger. If the French consolidated their position at

Fort Caroline, and then extended their control down the Florida peninsula to the Florida Straits, Spain's position in the Western Hemisphere would be jeopardized and her priceless possessions imperiled.

In this extremity the king of Spain turned to a man long famous for his bravery and brilliance as a strategist; a ruthless man and perhaps a religious fanatic, but a great fighter and a great leader—Pedro Menendez de Aviles.

Hawk-eyed and beetle-browed, Menendez was destined to play an important role in the history of the land of the Caloosas.

He was born at Aviles in Spain on February 15, 1519. He was a precocious youth and restless. To keep him at home, his parents had him married at the age of eight to a girl two years his senior. But even his child bride failed to hold him and when fourteen years old he ran away from home. For the next sixteen years he engaged in piracy, preying principally upon other pirates.

His feats were so daring and his prizes so rich that in 1549, when thirty years old, Charles V. commissioned him to attack the corsair Jean Alfonse who had just captured ten or more Spanish ships. He succeeded in recapturing five of the vessels and in the battle Alfonse suffered wounds from which he died. Shortly afterward the king commissioned Menendez to attack corsairs even in time of peace, granting him all the booty he could take. Records show he took plenty.

In 1554 he was appointed captain-general of the convoy which carried the trade between Spain and America. The appointment was made by the king over the head of the Casa de Contratacion, or governing board of the American trade. For various reasons his relations with members of that board became strained, some say because he refused to tolerate grafting and others because he out-grafted the worst grafters of that graft-ridden body. Finally, in 1563, he was arrested by order of the Casa and imprisoned for twenty months. His admirers say that the charges against him were false; his detractors say that when he was imprisoned he got his just desserts.

While in jail, Menendez' only son, Juan, was lost in a ship wreck off Bermuda while commanding a treasure fleet sailing from Mexico to Spain. Menendez was convinced that his son was not drowned and, upon his release from jail, sought permission from the king to go and search for him.

The request came at exactly the same time that Spanish officials had become most alarmed about the French colony and fort in Florida. So a deal was made. Menendez was permitted to go and seek his son and, at the same time, establish a Spanish colony in Florida—and drive out the French.

The agreement with the crown provided that Menendez was to shoulder all the expense of the expedition. It cost him a million ducats. But he hoped to get all the money back with compound interest. The king had promised him a grant of approximately 165 square miles of land in Florida of his own choosing. Moreover, he was awarded exclusive

trading rights with a number of West Indies islands. And, in addition, he was given authority to prey upon pirates who swarmed the seas. He was to have the title of adelantado, or governor, of Florida.

Sailing from Cadiz on July 8, 1565, Menendez reached Puerto Rico a month later and on August 28 entered and named the bay of St. Augustine and established a fort there. Just twenty-three days later, on September 20, he surprised the garrison at Fort Caroline and massacred almost everyone—men, women and children. After slaying them, Menendez hung their bodies on trees with the inscription "Not as Frenchmen but as Lutherans."

Less than two weeks after that massacre, Menendez overtook two hundred French survivors of a shipwreck at Mantanzas Inlet and, after they surrendered to him and laid down their arms, massacred all except eight who said they were Catholics.

It is possible that these two massacres in a row satisfied Menendez' thirst for Lutheran blood. Soon afterward he swooped down upon a hundred and fifty Frenchmen at Cape Canaveral who were trying to build a boat in which to flee and, when they surrendered, he refrained from killing them. He merely captured them.

Now that Florida was cleared of French, by massacre and by capture, Menendez was master of north Florida. He looked about him and decided he had won a rich domain. In jubilation he wrote to the king of Spain: "The province of Florida will bring enormous profits from vineyards, sugar, cattle, ship stores, pearls, timber, silk, wheat and endless supplies of fruit. And I assure your Majesty that in the future Florida will be of little expense and will pay your Majesty much money and will be of more value to Spain than New Spain or even Peru."

Late in November, 1565, Menendez sailed to Havana to get supplies for his colony at St. Augustine and for forces he had left at San Mateo, the Spanish name for Fort Caroline, and St. Lucie, where he had captured the one hundred and fifty Frenchmen.

In Havana, Menendez found the governor unfriendly. As a result, he had difficulty in getting the supplies he needed, particularly because he had run short of funds. So he took time out and spent a month or so engaging in the lucrative pastime of running down pirates. How many he captured is not reported; nevertheless, we are informed that by February 10, 1566, he had acquired a fleet of seven vessels so pirate-hunting must have proved quite profitable.

From Havana, Menendez sailed to the Dry Tortugas and then on to southwest Florida. He had heard that the Caloosa Indians held a number of Spanish captives and he wanted to find out if his son was among them. He also planned to establish a fort somewhere on the southwest coast. And he had still another aim: he wanted to recover some of the Spanish treasure he had been told the Caloosas had salvaged from wrecked ships. Waterfront gossip in Havana estimated the Caloosa wealth at millions of dollars, in gold and silver and precious gems, and doubtlessly

the gossips did not exaggerate. Certainly the Indians had wealth worth looking for, and Menendez was not the man to pass wealth by.

So northward Menendez sailed.

### *Menendez vs. Carlos*

With the arrival of Menendez in the land of the Caloosas, the curtain went up on one of the strangest dramas in American history.

The adelantado sighted land on February 17, 1566. A brisk, northwest wind was blowing and he ordered his larger ships to stand out in the Gulf. In a brigantine he sailed cautiously among the islands, seeking a harbor. He undoubtedly was close to the mouth of the Caloosahatchee.

Shortly after dawn the next day, while peering through the early morning mist he saw a canoe pull out from shore. The paddler was an almost naked man, sun-blackened. Approaching, he called out in Spanish: "Welcome, Spaniards and brother Christians! Welcome!"

Taken on board the brigantine, he was questioned closely. He said he had been captured from a wrecked Spanish ship long before and had been taken to a nearby Indian village. Eleven other Spaniards also were being held as captives. But the son of Menendez was not among them. He was sure of that.

The captive told Menendez that the chief of the nearby village was Carlos, the mightiest chief in all south Florida. Carlos would know, if anyone would, what had happened to Menendez' son.

Menendez decided to see the Indian chief. Even if he could not find his son he could rescue the Spanish captives. He would also be able to obtain, by trade or force, some of the salvaged Spanish treasure Carlos was said to have. Moreover, he might be able to induce Carlos to permit him to establish a fort or colony in this locality, plainly one of the finest spots he had seen in Florida.

Following directions given by the captive, Menendez threaded his way among the islands and entered the mouth of the Caloosahatchee. The channel was deep and the river, wide and beautiful, extended far inland, as far as eye could see. Carlos' village, the captive said, was several miles up the river.

Menendez told the captive to go on ahead and notify Carlos of his coming; to tell the chief that he had come to make friends with him, not to wage war with the Indians, nor to burn and plunder their villages.

Anchoring his brigantine, Menendez went ashore, probably at Punta Rassa. Hours later the Indian chief appeared, accompanied by a band of warriors armed with spears and bows and arrows.

The chief was plainly suspicious. He had a right to be. For more than a half century the Spaniards had ravaged his land, had taken away his men and women to die as slaves. What reason did he have for believing that Menendez was any different from the others who had come before? But he was willing to listen to what Menendez had to say.

The adelantado was suave and courteous. With the Spanish captive acting as interpreter, he told the chief that he had heard much of his prowess and his strength, and that he admired him greatly. To show his friendship, he said, he wished to present gifts. And he gave to Carlos a beautiful silk shirt, a pair of brightly embroidered breeches, a doublet and a hat.

Carlos accepted them, looked with pleasure at the gay colors, and smiled. Perhaps this white leader might be a man of peace after all. He turned to his men, gave an order and a bar of silver was brought forward and presented to Menendez. By its weight the adelantado judged it was worth at least two hundred ducats. He was not displeased. One bar of silver was not much but if he played his cards right he might be able to learn where Carlos kept other silver bars, and gold ingots as well.

He invited Carlos on board his brigantine. With twenty warriors, Carlos accepted the invitation. Food was brought out, and many bottles of wine. While they ate, they talked. Menendez brought up the subject of the Spanish captives, said that they undoubtedly were longing to get back to their homes again, and that Carlos should release them. This the chief promised to do.

Carlos kept his promise. That night five Spanish women and three men were brought to Menendez. None appeared to be overjoyed at being rescued from the Indians. The women were weeping bitterly; they had married Indians and did not want to leave their children behind. Even the men were not elated. They had married Indian women, had become accustomed to Indian ways, and were not unhappy with their lot.

Carlos said that three more captives, held in another village, would be turned over the next day. He also invited Menendez to visit him at his town up the river.

The adelantado was afraid to accept the invitation. He had only a small force of men in his brigantine and he had no intention of being trapped in an Indian stronghold. So he said he would visit Carlos later, and left, sailing up the coast. He did not return until he learned his fleet had arrived, bringing heavy reinforcements.

The nobles and soldiers on the larger ships had made good use of their time while awaiting Menendez' return. They had gone to the Caloosa village and traded almost worthless gadgets and trinkets for gold and silver and jeweled ornaments. They had made rich bargains but they were not satisfied. They had heard that Carlos had a horde of hidden treasure worth more than a hundred thousand ducats. And they pleaded with Menendez to capture Carlos and hold him until that wealth would be delivered to them.

Menendez would not listen. To do as they urged would disrupt his plans to establish a fort at this strategic point and make his hold on Florida secure. If he aroused the chief's anger, the establishment of the

fort would be a bloody undertaking—perhaps an impossible feat. No, the only thing to do was to cement the chief's friendship. The treasure could be secured later.

The adelantado now accepted Carlos' invitation to visit his village. The larger ships could not navigate the river so Menendez went in a brigantine. He did not go unprotected. He took with him two hundred men armed with muskets, called arquebuses. And to put on a good show he also took along his musicians: two fifers and drummers, three trumpeters, a violinist and a psalterist. Also a flag bearer, a singer, a dancer, and a very small dwarf.

When Menendez arrived at the up-river town he found a great crowd awaiting him. Carlos had sent messengers throughout his province to tell his tribesmen to assemble and greet the white leader—and to impress him with the Caloosa strength. Perhaps the Spanish truly wanted to become his friend but if not—well, it would be wise to let the Spaniard know the Caloosas were not a puny race, easily conquered.

Obeying orders, the Indians had come to the village from all directions—from the islands along the coast, from Charlotte Harbor and Peace River, from far up on the Caloosahatchee, and from miles in the interior. Never before had there been such a gathering of the Caloosas!

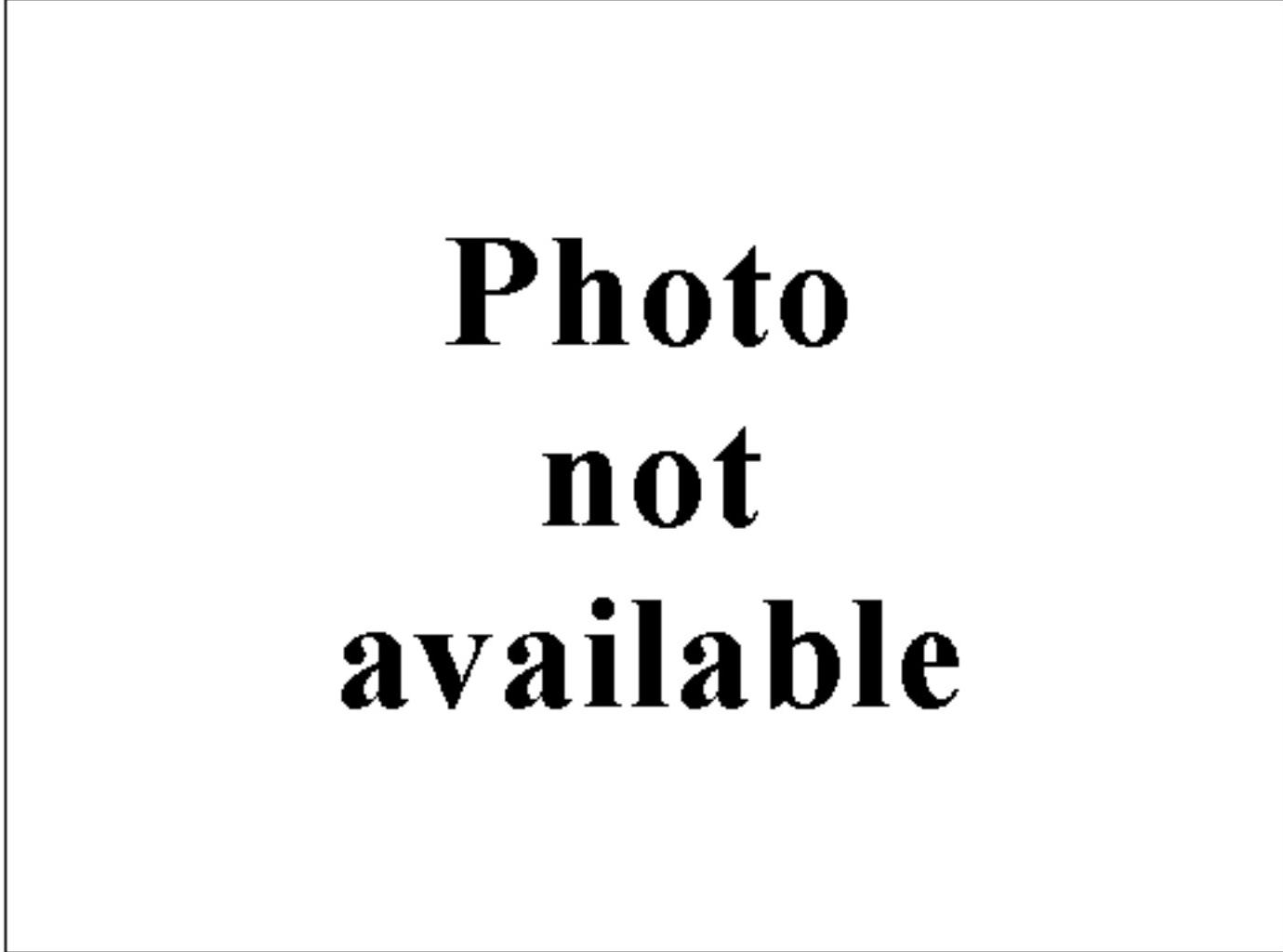


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Just sea oats waving in the breeze at a beach on the Gulf of Mexico.

The village, or town, consisted of about a hundred palm-thatched houses built among the palms and pines and oaks in a hammock along the shore. At the far end of the village, on a mound, there were several larger buildings where the chief lived with his family and held council with his petty chiefs and priests. In the center of the village there was a large enclosure, walled with logs and palm-thatched overhead. A towering ceremonial mound could be seen in the distance.

The settlement swarmed with Indians—men, women and countless naked children. They were everywhere. Through the crowd, Menendez marched with his men, preceded by his gaily-playing musicians and the flag-bearer, holding aloft a heavy silk banner with the royal arms of Castile and Leon.

Posting his armed men, Menendez entered the enclosure with twenty officers and was seated with the chief and his wife and sister on an elevated platform overlooking the massed throng.

Graceful Indian maidens, with jet black hair streaming down their naked backs, entertained with a ceremonial dance. Then the men took over, old men and young, chanting and shouting. After that, presents were exchanged and speeches made.

Menendez praised the power and friendliness of the Caloosa chief and the beauty of his wife. Particularly, the beauty of his wife. And well he might. She was a slim young thing, not over twenty, "very comely and beautiful with very good features; she had fine hands and eyes and looked from one side to another with much gravity and all modesty; she had a very good figure; her eyebrows were well marked and she wore at her throat a beautiful collar with pearls and stones and a necklace of gold beads; she was naked like the others, with only a covering in front."

When Carlos got up to speak he was all politeness and extremely friendly. He had decided, he said, that he and his people should become Christians and would take Menendez for their brother.

Here he paused. He looked long and fixedly at Menendez. Then he added: "And to make the union so secure that no one can break it, I give to you my favorite sister for your wife."

As the words were translated by the interpreter, Menendez sat bolt upright. He was stunned. Carlos' sister for a wife! Why, he was already married. Besides—and here he looked closely at the woman given to him—she was at least thirty-five years, almost an old squaw, and very grave, "and not at all beautiful." This would never, never do. Menendez tried to figure a way out of his predicament.

While he pondered, presents were exchanged and then food was served, fish roasted and boiled and oysters raw, boiled and roasted. That was all the Caloosas had to offer but Menendez added to the menu by bringing in from his brigantine a hundredweight of hard ship's biscuit, jars of honey and many casks of wine.

The feasting, drinking and entertainment continued for hours. While the celebration was at its height, Carlos leaned over to Menendez

and whispered that a place had been prepared for him to rest, and that his sister would join him there, since she had been given to him as wife. Menendez did not move. Carlos' eyes glittered. He spoke heatedly: "Four thousand of my people are here. They have come to honor you. If you do not honor us by taking my sister for your wife, they will be greatly angered. They will not endure your contempt."

The adelantado was in a dire dilemma. He had no desire to sleep with this homely woman, particularly when all his men would know about it and spread the tale throughout the Spanish realm. He would be laughed at for years. But he did not dare tell Carlos that his sister did not appeal to him. If he did, Carlos would be mortally offended and all his plans for a peaceful conquest of south Florida would be shattered.

He finally thought of an excuse. "Christian men," he said, "do not sleep with women who are not Christian."

Carlos replied tartly that since he had taken the white lord for his brother, naturally, he and all his people were Christians also. "One blood, one heart. There is no difficulty."

The feasting continued far into the night. And the drinking. More wine casks were brought from the ship and tapped. Everyone drank and became merry. Menendez began to feel quite good. His religious scruples, if he had any, began to melt away.

While the feasting went on, the Christian women bathed and clothed the chief's sister. She now returned to the banquet and "appeared much better than before when she was naked." Menendez looked at her again and now he was not displeased. The bathing—and clothes—had done wonders. She was really not half bad, after all. He seated her next to him "and said many things to her through the interpreter which pleased her." They danced.

A sprightly account of all that happened has been handed down to us in a narrative written by Gonzalo Solis de Meras, brother-in-law of Menendez, who was with him at the time.

"And when the dance was ended," Solis wrote, "they conducted her to rest on a bed which Menendez ordered to be made for her and he followed. And in the morning she rose very joyful and the Christian women who spoke to her said she was very much pleased."

Thus it was that the first "marriage of convenience" occurred on American soil—Menendez, the adelantado, "married" to the sister of Carlos, the Caloosa chief. His "wife" was given the name Dona Antonia and the harbor was named San Anton because of the prayers that Menendez had made to St. Anthony before he sailed from Havana.

Menendez and his men remained many days at the Caloosa village. They spent much of their time trading with the Indians to get as much as they could of the Caloosa horde of treasure. Just how much they got has never been revealed. De Meras was silent on that score. But he went to great lengths to relate how the adelantado tried to persuade the Caloosas to worship at the cross, destroy their idols and adopt Christian ways.

In this, Menendez had little success. Carlos was not deeply impressed with Christianity as preached — and practiced — by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. Perhaps he could not forget how the Spanish Christians had ravished and plundered his lands, and taken his people to be tortured and worked to death as slaves in the West Indies. But Carlos was diplomatic. He did not offend Menendez by saying he preferred his own religion to Christianity—he merely said that his sister should go with the white lord, as his wife, and be instructed as a Christian. Then, when she returned, she could tell him what to do.

Menendez would have much preferred to leave Dona Antonia behind. She undoubtedly loved him; her plain face was radiant as she looked at him with adoring eyes. But she no longer attracted him. However, Carlos had forced his hand and he had to take her with him as he boarded his brigantine to return to Havana.

At the last minute, three of the Spanish women who had been rescued from the Caloosas refused to leave. They preferred to remain with their Indian husbands and their children.

Back in Havana, Menendez placed Dona Antonia in the care of friends. Then he became absorbed in other affairs—mutiny at his colonies in St. Augustine and San Mateo and trouble with the Indians in north Florida.

But he did not forget the harbor of San Anton. He ordered one of his captains, Francisco de Reinoso, to go there and establish a fort. He also instructed him to see if he could find a cross-state waterway. He had been told that Carlos went from coast to coast by water, traveling by unknown channels, and Menendez was anxious to learn the route.

Reinoso built the fort at San Anton as instructed, probably on Pine Island. But he did not succeed in crossing the state by water. He may have gotten as far as Lake Okeechobee. It is even possible—but not likely—that he succeeded in inducing the Caloosas to dig the canal from Lake Hiepochee to Lake Okeechobee found in 1839 by surveyors of General Zachary Taylor. But, so far as is known, the Caloosas never were induced or brow-beaten by the Spaniards into doing anything they didn't want to do. The chances are the canal was dug by the Caloosas long before Menendez came.

Menendez returned to Carlos' village on March 10, 1567, almost a year to the day since he had left. He brought Dona Antonia with him. When Carlos saw that she did not have a child he was deeply offended. And he became offended even more when his sister told him that Menendez had not lived with her at any time while she was away, even though she had humiliated herself by begging him to be tender and loving. Carlos never forgave Menendez.

Two priests were with Menendez when he returned. They were Father Rogel and Father Villareal, both of the Society of Jesus. They were sincere, humble Christians and if they had accompanied Menendez on his first trip and proceeded in their own way to convert the Caloosas,

the course of south Florida history might have been greatly changed. But they came too late.

Not knowing that, Father Rogel built the first Christian mission on the West Coast, probably on Pine Island. During the following year he learned the Caloosa language and started to compile a Caloosa dictionary. His work has disappeared. Some day it may come to light among the millions of Spanish documents, still untranslated, which are stored in the archives at Seville.

When Menendez was told by Reinoso that a cross-state waterway had not been found by way of the Caloosahatchee, he sailed up the coast to Tampa Bay and explored the Hillsborough River. Unsuccessful, he left a garrison of thirty men at the Indian village of Tocobago to continue the search. On this journey he became friendly with Chief Tocobago. As a result, the relations between Menendez and Carlos became still further strained. Carlos and Tocobago had been enemies for years and Carlos bluntly told the adelantado that a friend of Tocobago could not be a true friend of his.

Sensing Carlos' growing enmity, Menendez increased the garrison at San Anton by fifty men. Then he departed for the East Coast. He left Dona Antonia behind—he had no further use for her.

Carlos was bitter. He was humiliated by the way Menendez had treated his sister. He was angry because Menendez had established a fort in the center of his kingdom. And he had become convinced that the adelantado's only aim was to conquer and enslave his people. He refused to listen to Father Rogel when the priest spoke of Christianity. To Carlos, Christianity meant only a tool used by the Spanish for accomplishing their wicked ends. He would have none of it.

Sternly, Carlos told the Spaniards to leave his country. He warned them that if they remained, he would call in his warriors and drive them out. The Spaniards persuaded him to come to their fort to talk things over, promising him that when the parley ended, he could return to his people. Foolishly, Carlos believed them. He went to the fort with twenty of his men. The gates were slammed shut. Carlos and his men were captured—and put to death.

Who ordered the death of Carlos is not known. Father Rogel said he tried to save him, but could not. Fontaneda said he was killed by Reinoso. Pedro Menendez Marquez, nephew of the adelantado, stated under oath in Madrid, Spain, on January 16, 1573, that he beheaded Carlos himself "along with twenty others of the most guilty and had a judicial record of it drawn up."

When the Caloosas learned that their chief had been killed, they were mad with rage. Many of the warriors demanded that they be permitted to storm the fort. But they were restrained by Don Felipe, son of Carlos. He had been taken to Havana by the Spaniards to learn "Christian ways" and while there he had been deeply impressed by

Spanish might. He realized that his warriors, valiant though they were, could never defeat the Spaniards in a drawn-out war so he counselled caution. His counsel prevailed.

Don Felipe succeeded his father as chief late in May, 1567. For a time he did nothing to antagonize the Spaniards.

Father Rogel held services in his crude chapel from June until December, 1567. He had some success with the young children, particularly when he had gifts to distribute, but little or none with the older Indians. They were polite to him, realizing he was unlike the other Spaniards, but seldom could be persuaded to enter his chapel. Father Rogel spent most of his time consoling the Spanish soldiers who had no liking for this place in the wilderness and longed to return home.

Hoping to force the Spaniards to leave, the Caloosas refused to bring them food as they had before. Toward the end of 1567 provisions became scarce in the fort and mission and Father Rogel went to Havana to obtain needed supplies. He returned the following month with Menendez Marquez. After putting some of the supplies ashore, they proceeded to Tocobago where the priest had had some success with the Indians.

At Tocobago, a shocking surprise awaited them. Twenty-six of the soldiers stationed there and their leader, Captain Garcia Martinez de Cos, had been massacred while foraging for food. Three others had been captured and held as slaves but they too were slain by the Indians when the Spanish ships came in sight. Menendez Marquez landed with his men, buried the three Spaniards and burned the village.

Back at Pine Island again, Father Rogel persevered in his efforts to convert the Indians. But their enmity toward the Spaniards was too great for him to overcome. He finally departed in sorrow and was succeeded by Father Alamo. He too found the assignment hopeless.

The Indians continued to refuse to bring in food. And the Spaniards, knowing what had happened to their comrades at Tocobaga when they went foraging for food, did not dare to leave the fort. They became hungrier and hungrier.

Perhaps in an effort to break the Caloosas' spirit, Menendez Marquez adopted drastic measures. Don Felipe and eleven of his petty chiefs were captured, probably by trickery, and charged with treacherously plotting the destruction of the Spaniards. The trial was a farce and all twelve of the Caloosa leaders were found guilty—and executed, on December 17, 1568.

The Spaniards gained nothing through the execution—or murder—of the Caloosa chiefs. Protected as they were by their fortress walls, and arquebuses, and fighting dogs, they were safe from Caloosa assault. But they were not safe from hunger. And when the Indians adopted a scorched-earth policy, burned their nearby villages, and disappeared, the position of the Spaniards became untenable. Unable to get enough

food themselves to satisfy their needs, they were forced to abandon the fort and mission, late in December, 1568.

As they sailed out into the Gulf they saw rising from Pine Island a great pillar of smoke. The Caloosas had returned and set fire to the fort and mission buildings. The act was a final gesture of defiance. The Spaniards had killed Carlos, and Don Felipe, and many of their bravest warriors but the Indians' fighting spirit remained unbroken.

For many, many years the Caloosas were unmolested by the white man. They were too tough to conquer and too stubborn to convert. So they were left alone.

### *The Golden Age of the Caloosas*

The Spanish had left. Soldiers and priests. And with their departure a golden age for the Caloosas dawned—a period of a century or more during which they were not molested. During this period the tribe reached its peak in numbers and made its greatest advancement in culture.

There was no marked change in the way the Caloosas lived. They continued to build their mounds as they had done in days gone by, along the coast, on the banks of streams and rivers, and far in the interior. They fished and hunted and occasionally battled with nearby tribes.

In the veins of many of the Caloosas there was now more than a trace of Spanish blood. Spanish men and women captured from wrecks had intermarried with the natives. And Spanish soldiers, stationed at San Anton, had sought and found female companionship. When they departed they left children behind.

This mixture of Spanish blood with Indian may account for a marked improvement shown in articles made by the Caloosas during the seventeenth century. Better pottery was baked and more artistically decorated. Ornaments of all kinds were more beautifully designed. Better weapons and tools were produced. Of course all this improvement might have been purely the result of natural evolution but it is only logical to assume that the Spanish blood was a contributing factor. Certainly it did not tend to make the Caloosas any less able—or less aggressive. They continued to dominate all South Florida.

Years passed. And then there came the day when the first Spanish trader appeared among the islands in Carlos Bay. His ship was small and he had no fighting dogs, or deadly muskets, or force of fighting men. He was just a lone trader with perhaps his wife and a child or two.

The Caloosas who saw him coming had no fear of him. They recognized him for what he was. Their own great sea-going trading canoes had passed many similar Spanish trading boats in the waters around the Florida keys.

The newcomer was from Havana. He had no difficulty making known what he came for—traders everywhere speak almost the same

sign language. He wanted to get alligator hides, and deer skins, and fish, and turtles, and anything else the Caloosas had to offer. To pay for them he had many articles which struck the Indians' fancy. Knives and axes, kitchen utensils, pottery, bolts of gaily colored cloth, trinkets of all kinds.

Before a day passed the trader's boat was filled. The Caloosas were well satisfied with the deals which had been made. And so was he. Before long he was followed by other traders. Soon there was a lively traffic in goods between Cuba and the land of the Caloosas.

The Spanish traders undoubtedly helped greatly in breaking down the hatred of the whites which had been aroused by the slave hunters and conquistadors in years gone by. The Caloosas now began to realize that there were Spaniards who believed, like themselves, in the policy of live and let live, not the policy of conquer and kill and plunder.

Proof of the improved relationships was furnished in 1612 when a peace mission from St. Augustine under Lieut. Juan Rodriguez de Cartayo sailed up the green waters of the Caloosahatchee and anchored off the principal Caloosa settlement. Cartayo's small ship was met by more than sixty canoes filled with unarmed men and women who welcomed him to their town. The chief himself came out to the ship in a great canoe paddled by forty braves and gave to Cartayo, as an act of friendship, two gold "chaguales" weighing about two ounces each which the Indians wore on their foreheads.

Voluntarily, the chief turned over a Negro from Havana who had been shipwrecked on the coast and he also voluntarily promised to guarantee safe passage to St. Augustine for any persons who might be wrecked on his coasts in the future.

Cartayo was much impressed by the Caloosa chief and, in a letter to Governor Juan Fernandez de Olivera, expressed the hope "that within a short time monks will be able to go there in safety and reap great harvest because this cacique has more than sixty towns of his own besides many others which pay him tribute."

But Cartayo's hope apparently was never realized. Spanish records indicate that the Caloosas had had enough of missionaries. One old document reveals that in 1680 a reconnaissance of the Caloosa country was made preparatory to the resumption of missionary work but that the emissary was turned back after he reached the town of the Caloosa chief. Another old document states that a similar missionary effort, made in 1697, had the same fate.

Even though the Caloosas turned missionaries back, they continued to welcome Spanish traders. The historian Barcia reported that in the one month of March, 1698, the trade with the Caloosas totalled \$17,000.

But the Spanish traders brought something to Caloosa shores besides trinkets, and gayly colored cloths, and other things the Caloosas wanted. They brought something for which the Caloosas paid a dreadful price. They brought diseases—white men's diseases.

*The Decline of the Caloosas*

In September, 1913, workmen getting shell for road-making from a small island off Punta Rassa made a gruesome discovery. Their shovels bit into human skeletons, just below the surface. Scores of skeletons, scattered over a wide area. It was evident that at some time in the bygone past many persons had died here, and their bodies left where they fell for the buzzards to pick the bones.

The only logical explanation offered to explain the lack of customary Indian burial was that the men and women whose skeletons were found had been stricken by disease and taken to the island to die, alone and uncared for, in an attempt to prevent the disease from spreading.

That explanation may or may not be correct. But it is a known fact that the Caloosas were ravaged by white men's diseases just when they reached the height of their power. They died like flies from small pox, measles, tuberculosis and yellow fever, diseases they had not had before the white man came. Whole villages were wiped out. Sometimes the bodies of the victims were heaped up by the score and hastily covered



Beaches of the Gulf keys present countless scenes of striking beauty.

with a thin layer of earth; sometimes they were left untouched, unprotected from the elements and scavenger birds and beasts.

No one knows how many Caloosas died from the diseases of the white man. The total probably ran into thousands. Certainly the tribe was greatly weakened—tragically weakened. The decline of the Caloosas had begun.

Their downfall was accelerated by English slave raiders, as rapacious and as ruthless as the Spanish slave raiders had been before them.

The English had settled the Carolinas and moved on into Georgia. Ever hungry for more land, they clashed repeatedly with the Spanish and the Spaniards' Indian allies in north Florida. With their own Indian allies, the Creeks and the Yemasses, they drove deep into the peninsula. Many of their raids were made on the pretext that they were seeking runaway Negro slaves. But almost invariably they were after Indians whom they could sell as slaves at high prices in the slave markets of the South.

The Spanish governor at St. Augustine reported in 1708 that more than twelve thousand Christian Indians had been captured in north Florida by the English and sold into slavery and that only three hundred men, women and children remained and that "even these are being carried off daily."

The Yemassee Indians, allies of the English, established a slave-hunting route down the Kissimmee River and deep into the Lake Okeechobee region and made raids along the Caloosahatchee. How many hundreds, or thousands, of Caloosa were captured and sold as slaves no one knows or ever will know. The English slayers, like their Spanish predecessors, kept no records.

As a result of the epidemics and slave raids, the once mighty tribe of Caloosa all but disappeared. However, a few of their settlements remained, deep in the Big Cypress where the slave hunters dared not follow them, and on the keys along the coast where they had a measure of Spanish protection.

The Caloosa had gotten along well with the Spaniards ever since the first Spanish trading ships had appeared off the West Coast. In time the relationship became so close that the Caloosa became known to the English, and later the Americans, as the Spanish Indians.

Spanish fishermen, as well as the Spanish traders, had dealings with the Caloosa. To get fish for the Cuban market, they began coming up the West Coast late in the seventeenth century. They established fish "ranchos" on the keys where they dried and salted their catch. At these ranchos, many Caloosa Indians were employed. As payment for their work they received part of the catch and general supplies, and also guns and ammunition.

A number of such ranchos were seen in 1769 by Captain Bernard Romans when he sailed along the coast to get data for his famous Florida

map which was published five years later. Romans said that the Spaniards fished from September to March, using about thirty vessels of from fifteen to forty tons and employing from twelve to forty men. He said they salted about a thousand tons of fish each year and also netted huge quantities of mullet from which they took nothing but the roe. The fishermen, he said, averaged about two hundred and eighty dollars each for eight weeks' work.

The Spanish fisheries were investigated in 1824 by Lt. Com. James M. McIntosh, captain of the U. S. Schooner Terrier. In his report he described a fishery at Punta Rassa:

"The inhabitants . . . are Spaniards and Indians. The Spaniards are extensively engaged in fishing, making seines, or cultivating the soil. A considerable part of the key (?) is cleared, and under fine culture of corn, pumpkins and melons. There are nine neat well-thatched houses, with an extensive shed for drying fish, and a store house for their salt and provisions. Ten or fifteen bushels of salt, a small cask containing a few gallons of molasses, with a little salt provisions, were all I could discover they had.

"There are also two other places of a similar kind, one situated about a mile within the entrance of the Coosahata River (Caloosahatchee?), the other on a small key near the entrance of Boca Grande, or Charlotte Harbor. . . . There are Spaniards living on this last key who have resided here for thirty years. . . . They have attached to each of these establishments a small schooner and are licensed as fishing vessels by the Captain General of Cuba."

The fisheries were investigated again seven years later by the collector of the Key West district. He reported that at four establishments in the Carlos Bay-Charlotte Harbor district approximately one hundred and fifty men were employed, "half of which number probably are Indians and about thirty Indian women, with fifty to one hundred children. They live in palmetto huts and in the most simple manner, their chief articles of food being the fish they catch. They salt and send to Havana from 6,000 to 8,000 quintals (a quintal equals 101.43 pounds) annually, the usual price being three to four dollars a quintal." The exports of the four fisheries in 1831 were valued at \$18,000 and consisted principally of dried fish, fish roes and fish oil.

One of the main reasons why the fisheries were investigated by the Americans was to learn whether they were being used as havens by Caribbean pirates.

Oh, yes, the West Coast had its pirates, at least in legend.

### *Gasparilla Roamed the Seas*

A pirate bold was Gasparilla. A pirate fierce and daring. Upon the merchantmen sailing the deep blue waters of the Gulf he preyed and ruthless was he with his captives. The luckless males he forced to walk the plank and the ladies—ah, the ladies—he kept them for his very own.

Not always had Gasparilla been a pirate. Born in Barcelona, he was educated for the Spanish Navy. He stood high in the graces of the Spanish court and became an admiral.

But then one sorry day in 1782 Gasparilla got itchy fingers and he filched the crown jewels. His theft discovered, he deserted his wife and children, gathered together a tough lot of Catelonian cutthroats, stole the best ship of the Spanish fleet, and fled to the Caribbean and the dim blue coast of Florida.

To the islands of Carlos Bay and Charlotte Harbor, Gasparilla made his wicked way. Sanibel Island became his lair. Atop an observation tower, a grim sentinel always stood and whenever a ship was spotted upon the warm, smiling waters of the Gulf, Gasparilla sallied forth and captured it. He buried the loot on the island he named Gasparilla and there also he made his home, regal in its fittings. The captured females he kept on Captiva, all those he did not want immediately for his harem.

One day in 1801 a galleon from Mexico hove in sight. In its hold was a rich cargo of gold, in chests of copper. But richer still was its cargo of human treasure. A beautiful Spanish princess was on board and eleven of Mexico's fairest daughters, all bound for the court in Madrid. Gasparilla, brute that he was, tossed the daughters of Mexico to his crew. For himself he kept the gorgeous Spanish beauty. He propositioned her—and, royal lady that she was, she slapped his face! Straightway Gasparilla cut off her royal head, with one clean cut of his sword.

For once, Gasparilla regretted his evil deed. He took the slim body of the princess in his arms, carried it ashore, and buried it. The princess still lies in her lonely grave. The night birds sing in the dusk and lull her spirit to rest, and the moon throws kindly shadows o'er the spot.

By 1821 Gasparilla and his sinful crew had amassed a fortune of thirty million dollars of stolen treasure. The United States Navy was on their trail and the pirates gathered to divide the loot and then disband. But just when the division of wealth was being made, a strange and seductive sail appeared off Boca Ciega Pass. It looked like a large English merchantman.

Gasparilla's eyes lit with greed. He could not resist the temptation of taking one more rich prize before his pirate days were ended. Out into the Gulf he sailed to engage the Englishman. But suddenly the British flag came down, the American flag went up, canvas disguises fell away, and there before Gasparilla's startled eyes was a United States naval sloop with blazing guns.

Gasparilla turned to flee. But again and again his ship was hit by cannon shot. It became disabled. Gasparilla realized the end had come. He wrapped himself in anchor chains and jumped into the sea. A moment of ripples. A moment of bubbles. And then all was still. Gasparilla had gone to his final resting place. The members of his wicked crew were hung to the yard arms of the sloop. All but the cabin boy

and ten men left behind to guard the captives. They fled to the mainland and were never seen again.

The treasure of Gasparilla has never been discovered. His palatial home has disappeared. But fishermen say that sometimes in the dead of the night, off Gasparilla Island, when the waves are singing a soft lullaby to the weary and the wind is whispering sweet messages through the palms, the phantom vessels of the pirate fleet arise from their ocean resting places and pursue, as in days of old, the ghost ships of the merchantmen.

That's the legend of Gasparilla. And a fascinating legend it is indeed. So fascinating that the good people of Tampa have not permitted it to die. Each spring Gasparilla is resurrected by the exclusive Gasparilla Society of Tampa and he relives his sins as a buccaneer, to the plaudits of the multitudes.

Unfortunately, the legend cannot be verified. And, strangely enough, Gasparilla Island bore that name at least eight years before the pirate Gasparilla stole the Spanish jewels and launched his piratical career. Boca Gasparilla and likewise Boca Captiva and Sanibel Island appeared on the map of Florida published by Bernard Romans in 1774. Karl Bickel, author of The Mangrove Coasts, contends that Gasparilla Island was probably named for a Friar Gasper whose name appeared often in old Spanish records because of his work as a missionary in the Charlotte Harbor area.

The legend first appeared in print in an advertising folder published by the Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railroad in 1911. It was written by F. R. Feland of a New York advertising firm. Feland insists that he did not invent the tale; he said he heard it at Boca Grande and merely wrote what he was told.

The entire legend is based upon a yarn allegedly told by one of the most colorful characters who ever lived on the Florida West Coast, John Gomez, who died July 12, 1900, at the exceedingly ripe old age of one hundred and twenty-two.

A short, heavy-set man with a mop of curly white hair which had once been black, Gomez often came to Fort Myers and regaled everyone who would listen to his tales. He said he had been born in Portugal in 1778 and moved to France with his family when a youth. Napoleon once patted him on the back and predicted he would become a good soldier. Soon after the Napoleon incident he signed up as a cabin boy on a vessel bound for Charleston, S. C., and deserted the ship the first day after it reached port. From there he went to St. Augustine, in 1794, while the Spanish flag waved over the fort. Then he took to sea again.

Gomez never talked much about the next thirty-five years of his life. But he threw out dark hints about his having been a slaver, even a pirate, and that he had seen many strange sights and gone through strenuous times. From 1835 to 1838, he insisted, he fought in the Seminole War and was with General Zachary Taylor in the battle of

Okeechobee on Christmas day, 1937. Sometime after the war ended, he settled in the Ten Thousand Islands on Panther Key and during the Civil War had his hand in blockade running. Shortly thereafter he took unto himself a wife and from then on led a precarious existence as a fisherman and beachcomber. To help him make ends meet, the county commissioners of Lee County paid him eight dollars a month for many years after he had become a century old. A tough old rascal, Gomez did not die in bed but while fishing for mullet off Panther Key. His foot got tangled in the anchor rope and when he threw the anchor overboard, down went John to the bottom of the Gulf, all 122 years of him.

During his lifetime, Gomez was made the subject of scores of newspaper and magazine articles. He was also mentioned in many books. But none of the writers ever reported that Gomez had ever said anything about Gasparilla. The legend popped up only after Gomez was dead and gone and could no longer affirm or deny its authenticity. That doesn't mean, of course, that he never told it. Perhaps he did. Who knows?

In any event, the Gasparilla legend sounds as plausible as most other yarns about pirates who reportedly infested the waters off the south Florida coast. None has ever been verified. But lack of verification of the pirate tales has not stopped the search for buried treasure. Old timers say that almost every foot of the beaches of the islands of San Carlos Bay has been probed for pirates' chests. Perhaps treasure has been found. Perhaps it hasn't. We do not know.

However, all that is beside the point. Let's get back to the story of southwest Florida—and the story of Fort Myers.



## CHAPTER II

### A FAIR LAND IS LOST—AND WON

**A**MERICANS REJOICED in 1821. Particularly Americans in Georgia, Alabama and the Carolinas. The fair Province of Florida had been purchased from Spain and a vast region was opened for settlement and exploitation.

But there were prior claimants to the land—the Indians. Remnants of tribes, once mighty, which had lived in Florida since the days before the conquistadors. And other groups, far stronger, which had fled to Florida during the preceding century from the west and north as the French and English bore down upon them and took their lands. Bands of Yemasseees, Choctaws, and Yuchis. The courageous Mikasukis. And, much more numerous than all the rest, the Seminoles, the “free people,” a tribe so numerous that Americans called all the Indians by that name.

For all these Indians, Florida was home. They loved it. They could see no reason why they should give up their fields and forests, their herds of cattle, the Negro runaways who had come to them for safety and were now their allies, to the white invaders from the North. They listened stonily to proposals aimed at deporting them to the West. When the Americans kept pressing down upon them, they resisted stubbornly and fought back, as men of courage do everywhere when imposed upon.

The bloody Seminole War of 1836 to 1842 was the inevitable result.

As every school child knows, the conflict began with the Dade Massacre eight miles north of Tampa on December 28, 1835. Major Francis L. Dade and one hundred and seven of his men were killed.

The nation was enraged. Federal reinforcements were rushed in. Florida volunteers joined the fray. Soon the Seminoles and their allies were greatly outnumbered. But they continued to fight. And, being Indians, they fought in Indian fashion. They ambushed small bands of whites and burned isolated frontier homes, viciously killing and scalping whole families.

Occasionally the Indians met the whites in open battle. The last time was on Christmas Day, 1837. In the valley of the Kissimmee, a few miles north of Lake Okeechobee, bands of Mikasukis and Seminoles fought it out with troops commanded by Colonel Zachary Taylor. Old Rough and Ready, as he was known, had 1,067 men. The number of Indian warriors is not known. The Battle of Okeechobee lasted all day. Twenty-six soldiers were killed and 112 wounded. But by sheer force of numbers and splendid bravery, the troops made the Indians flee into the almost impenetrable swamps and marshlands of the Glades.

Colonel Taylor pursued the Indians to a great Indian mound a little east of the lower edge of Lake Okeechobee. There he destroyed a

Mikasuki settlement but the trail of the Indians vanished in the sawgrass and Taylor went no further.

American soldiers pierced the Indian territory south of the Caloosahatchee for the first time soon after the Battle of Okeechobee. A strong force commanded by Col. Persifer F. Smith left Fort Basinger, on the Kissimmee River on January 8, 1838, headed southwestward, crossed the Caloosahatchee and proceeded on to Punta Rassa, at the mouth of the river. On this line of march three supply depots were established, two at the place he crossed the river, about half way between the present towns of Alva and LaBelle, and the third at Punta Rassa.

He named the depot on the north bank of the river, at the crossing point, Fort T. B. Adams, after an officer who had been wounded in the Battle of Okeechobee, and the south bank depot, Fort Denaud after Pierre Denaud, a French trapper who had ventured into the wilds years before and had established a small Indian trading post. The depot at Punta Rassa was named Fort Dulany after the officer left in command, Capt. William Dulany.

Colonel Smith then retraced his steps to Fort Denaud and from there struck straight south into the Big Cypress where he established another supply depot which he named Fort Keais. His column then swept eastward through the Glades and then northward again to the head of the Caloosahatchee. There still another depot was established, Fort Thompson, named in honor of Lieut. Col. Alexander R. Thompson who was killed in the battle of Okeechobee.

At these so-called forts, the soldiers slept in tents and at none of them was there more than a small blockhouse and a warehouse for the storage of supplies. All were abandoned when the rainy season set in.

Colonel Smith fought no engagements on his historic march into the heart of the Indian country due to the fact that the Indians successfully eluded him. However, his men overran many small Indian settlements which they destroyed.

The Battle of Okeechobee and Colonel Smith's long march were crushing blows to the Indians and later in 1838 they suffered many other severe reverses elsewhere on the peninsula. Steadily increasing numbers of them were captured or forced to surrender. By the end of the year more than two thousand of their men, women and children had been rounded up and deported to the West.

The spirit of the Indians was not broken but they were weakened and discouraged. Therefore, they listened eagerly to a proposal made to them in May, 1839, which seemed to offer them a chance to lay down their arms with honor.

The proposal was advanced by Major General Alexander Macomb, commander-in-chief of the American Army, who came from Washington in an effort to end the war without further fighting. The general sent messengers throughout the peninsula urging the chiefs to meet at Fort King to negotiate a new treaty—a treaty which would permit the Indians

to remain in Florida. With pathetic hope, the chiefs assembled. They were headed by Chief Chitto-Tustenugger, principal chief of the Seminoles.

Another Seminole chief responded to the call—a chief whose name was to appear often in the history of Fort Myers. He was Hollatter-Micco, better known as Billy Bowlegs, not because of bowed legs, for Billy's legs were strong and straight, but because he had a remote French ancestor named Beaulieu which became contracted somehow or other to Bolek. When Billy pronounced the name it sounded like "Bowlegs," so that was what whites called him.

The meeting at Fort King was held May 17. With every appearance of sincerity, General Macomb told the assembled chiefs that the government had decided they should be allowed a large part of Florida for their very own, a reservation where they would not be molested by the whites, where they and their children could live in peace and happiness.

The territory General Macomb said would be set aside for the Indians embraced a large part of southwest Florida: from Charlotte Harbor and Peace River on the north, to the center of Lake Okeechobee and Shark River on the east, and to the Gulf on the west. One of the fairest sections in all Florida. It included practically all of what is now Lee County and major portions of Charlotte, Glades, Hendry and Collier counties.

Joyfully the Seminoles and their allies accepted the proposal. At last they had been granted what they had been fighting for—a homeland in Florida where they could remain forever. One after another the chiefs promised that their tribes would move into the reservation within sixty days.

The bloody Seminole War seemed to be ended. Settlers began streaming back to frontier homes they had abandoned more than two



Fishermen who settled on the Caloosahatchee and on the keys nearly a century ago lived in palmetto-thatched houses such as this.

years before. Seminoles began moving toward the reservation. Soldiers started packing up their kits and counting the days until they could go home again.

According to the terms of the treaty, a trading house was to be established within the reservation for the convenience of the Indians.

To establish such a post, Lieut. Col. William Selby Harney sailed up the Caloosahatchee early in July with a force of twenty-six dragoons, armed with Colt rifles. Six civilians also were in the party: Dalham, who was to operate the post; two clerks, Morgan and Smith; H. McCarty, the pilot and two Negro interpreters, Primus and Sampson. A large supply of Indian goods was carried along.

Harney selected a site for the trading house on the north bank of the Caloosahatchee about nine miles down the river from the present site of Fort Myers. At this point, a swash channel ran close to shore, affording an excellent spot for boats to dock. Tents were pitched and a camp set up. Work then was started on erecting a large log building for the trader.

The construction work had barely begun when Indians appeared. They were friendly and spent hours talking with the dragoons and Trader Dalham. Then one day they failed to appear. No one was surprised or gave their absence a second thought.

However, the failure of the Indians to make another friendly visit was deadly significant. It resulted from their having received a message which for them was tragic. A runner had come in from Fort King with the shocking word that General Macomb had not meant what he said—that instead of the reservation being permanent it was only to be temporary. Soldiers were saying at the fort, the runner added, that the Indians were to be captured as soon as they moved into the reservation, and then deported.

The Indians were furious. They had been lied to again, deceived again. Just as they had been so often lied to and deceived before.

A council of war was immediately called. Messengers were sent out to all the settlements in the Glades and Big Cypress. Chiefs came in with their warriors. And this time two of the principal leaders of the Spanish Indians, Chekika and Hospetarke, joined in the discussions. They had not taken part in the war before but now they were aroused. The establishment on the Caloosahatchee of the trading house, which had every appearance of being a fort, was a menace which had to be removed. It was too close to the heart of their domain.

Fighting speeches were made by Arpeika, the crafty Mikasuki chief known to the whites as Old Sam Jones, and by Otulka, a revengeful Creek called the Prophet, whom the Indians believed held communion with the Great Spirit. The words of Otulka and Arpeika stung like wasps. So did those of Billy Bowlegs, most hot-headed of the Seminoles. The warriors seethed with anger toward the whites. Once more they were ready to go to war. Ready and eager.

Back on the Caloosahatchee, Harney had no inkling that the Indians had again taken up arms. That day, Wednesday, July 21, he was so satisfied with the way work was progressing that he went fishing. He did not return until after dusk. After eating, he went to bed. He said later he had intended to post sentries but was so tired that he neglected to do so. The error was fatal.

Just before dawn the next day the post was attacked by a force of more than two hundred hate-crazed Indians led by Chekika, Hospetarke and Billy Bowlegs. The warriors came in from all directions, shrieking and shooting. The surprise was complete. No effectual resistance could be made. Some of the dragoons were stabbed to death in their beds while struggling to get out from under their mosquito nets. Others were shot down as they groped for their rifles.

Colonel Harney, clad only in his drawers and shirt, managed to escape and so did eight of his dragoons. In the darkness, the colonel was separated from his men. He swam to a rowboat anchored in the river. Just as he picked up the oars he heard a man swimming in the water. Cautiously he rowed toward him and discovered he was an injured dragoon. The colonel pulled him aboard and then rowed away, down the river.

Seven other dragoons succeeded in fleeing from the camp. They swam to a sloop anchored in the river and got away. Near Punta Rassa they were met by the sloop "Jane," from Tampa, on which there were three men, armed only with one rifle. Turning back, they were met by the rowboat in which Harney and the wounded soldier were escaping.

It was now broad daylight and Colonel Harney realized that nothing could be done then toward rescuing any survivors of the massacre. So his small party went ashore at the abandoned army supply depot at Punta Rassa and made camp. The wounds of the men were dressed.

Late that night Harney started back toward the trading post, accompanied by three men, the others having been left behind to guard the wounded. The trip up the river was made with muffled oars. They landed a half mile below the post, crawled through mangroves to solid ground, and then stealthily made their way to the scene of the massacre. No Indians were seen. The bodies of eight white men were found. They had all been scalped.

Returning to the boat, Harney and his men rowed cautiously up the Caloosahatchee. After going several miles they saw the light of an Indian camp on the north shore. Edging closer, they soon discerned Indians moving about the fire. Boisterous noises were heard. The savages apparently had taken with them two barrels of whiskey from Trader Dalham's stock and were celebrating their victory. Believing that many of the Indians would be dead drunk, Harney talked over with his men the advisability of making a surprise attack on the camp to get revenge. But the others advised against it saying they were hopelessly outnumbered and had only one rifle. So just before daybreak, Harney and his men departed. The survivors of the massacre later went to Tampa.

Official reports revealed that eighteen dragoons, Trader Dalham and his two clerks, and Pilot McCarty had been killed. The two Negro interpreters were captured but later were released by the Indians. The bodies of fourteen of the victims were never found. The reports also showed that the Indians had taken all of Dalham's goods, valued at \$3,000, and \$1,000 in cash. They also took all the property of the soldiers including fourteen Colt rifles with ammunition.

When Lieut. W. K. Hanson, commander at Fort Mellon, learned of the massacre, he seized forty-six Seminoles who had come to his post for provisions and shipped them to Charleston, S. C., from which point they were later deported to Arkansas.

Years later a letter was found in the War Department which indicated that General Macomb had indeed deceived the Indians. While he led them to believe that they could have the reservation forever, he really intended it to be only temporary. This was shown by his statement: "Under existing circumstances I did not think it necessary to enter into a formal written treaty . . . Nor did I think it politic to say anything about their emigration leaving that subject open to such future arrangements as the government may think proper to make." The letter was written May 22, 1839.

The massacre on the Caloosahatchee stunned all Florida. Settlers who had returned to their home now abandoned them again and fled for safety. The militia was called out to guard settlements as far north as Tallahassee. The entire territory was panic stricken. Frenzied demands were made for the federal government to send in enough troops to exterminate all the Indians. Next to the Dade Massacre, the massacre on the Caloosahatchee was the worst which had occurred in Florida and everyone insisted that it be avenged.

Warfare against the Indians was resumed on a scale never equalled in the past. The troops in Florida now were under the command of Zachary Taylor, who had been promoted to the rank of brigadier general. He ordered all-out action, determined to prosecute the war to the bitter end.

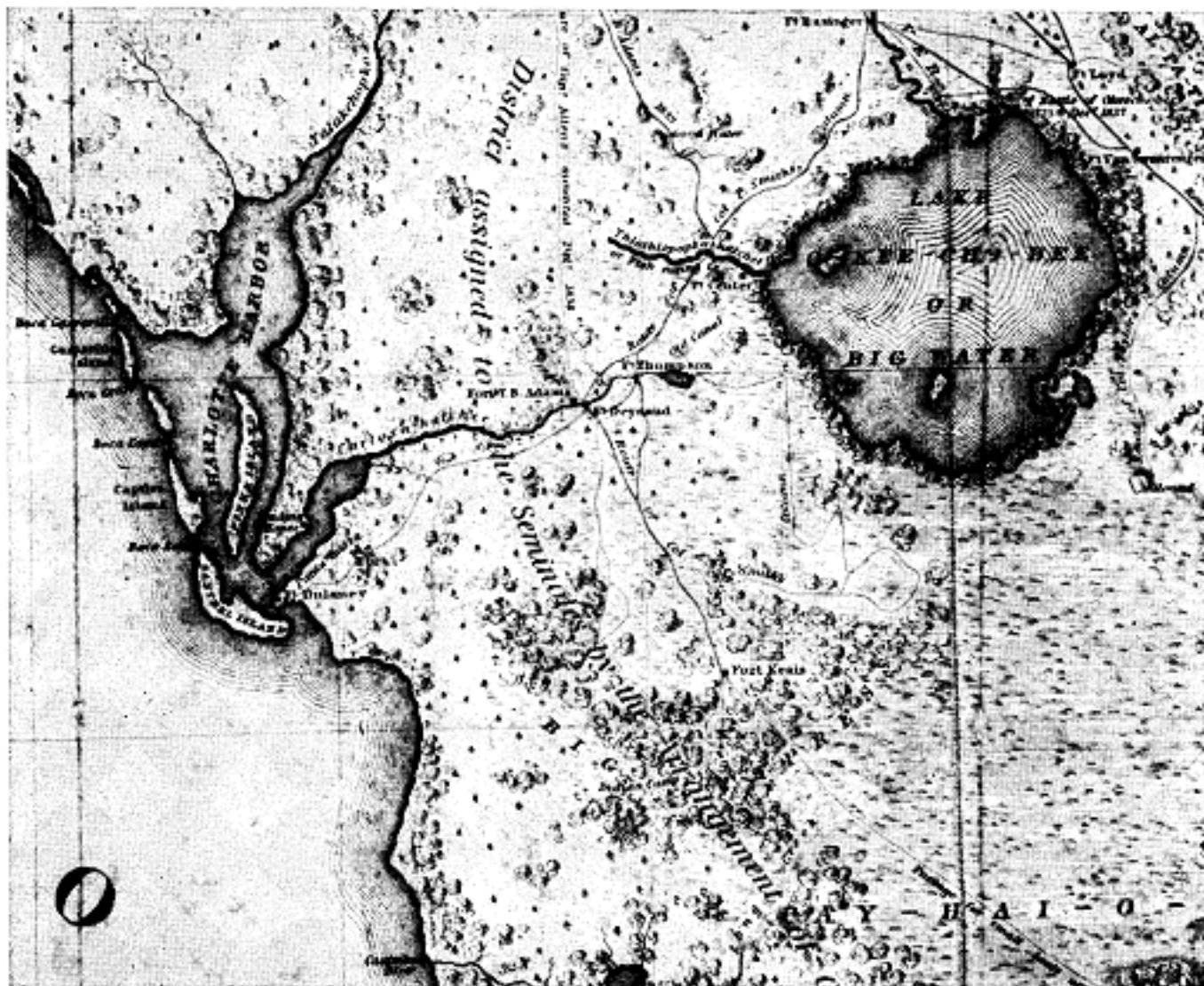
Before General Macomb made his ill-fated peace offer, Taylor had worked out a plan dividing the country into twenty-mile squares and placing a blockhouse as near the center of each as practicable. He now put this plan into effect. He established fifty-three new posts and ordered wagon roads constructed deep into the Glades. Expeditions were sent out to destroy every Indian settlement that could be found.

As part of his campaign, General Taylor re-established the four forts on the Caloosahatchee which had been abandoned in the late spring of 1838—Dulany, Denaud, T. B. Adams, and Thompson. They all served as bases of operations deep into Indian territory. From them troops moved into the Big Cypress and Everglades, ferreting out Indian settlements and burning them, and destroying crops the Indians had planted.

General Taylor harried the Seminoles and their allies in every way possible. He even went to the extreme of approving a plan for bringing in bloodhounds from Cuba to track the Indians to their secret hiding places. Thirty-three were purchased at a cost of \$151.72 each. Five Spaniards from Cuba, experienced in slave hunting, were hired to handle the dogs. But the bloodhounds, trained for Negro hunting, would not follow the scent of Indians. All that the general got from the experiment was a flood of criticism.

One event occurred during the following winter which is indirectly a part of the history of the Fort Myers region. Colonel Harney finally got revenge for the Caloosahatchee massacre. At the same time he avenged the cruel murder by the Indians of Dr. Henry Perrine, famous botanist, at his home on Indian Key on August 7, 1840.

At the time Dr. Perrine was murdered, Colonel Harney was stationed at Fort Dallas on the Miami River. Soon afterward he learned that the murder had been committed by Spanish Indians then hiding in the Glades.



*Map Courtesy of A. B. Edwards, Sarasota*

This is a section of the famous General Zachary Taylor map of Florida made in 1839 by army surveyors. This section of the map shows the Caloosahatchee area which was then part of the reservation set aside for the Seminoles. Fort Myers is not shown—it was not established until 1850. The trading house shown north of Punta Rassa was the scene of the Harney Massacre. Lines of march made by the army in 1838 and 1839 are indicated, as well as all the oldest forts.

Suspecting that they might be the same Indians who had massacred his own men more than a year before, he determined to track them down.

With a force of two hundred men in thirty long, light Indian canoes, Harney went up the Miami River on December 4, 1840, and struck westward into the Glades. For five days the party pushed through the sawgrass, searching hammocks. They found three tiny settlements, none of which contained more than several families. Indian men in the settlements could not escape without deserting their wives and children. They chose to remain. They resisted but were overpowered and captured. Altogether, Harney's forces captured six men, seven women and many small children. One of the men was big, lean Chief Chekika who had led the band of Spanish Indians at the Caloosahatchee massacre.

Harney ordered the men hung. What followed was described by Capt. John T. Sprague in his century-old "History of the Florida War." Said Sprague: "With sullen indifference the Indians awaited their fate, asked for no mercy, but manifested to the last moment their bitter contempt and malignity towards the white man." History does not record what Harney did with the women and children he captured.

With the hanging of Chekika and five of his warriors, the Spanish Indians, last known remnant of the once mighty Caloosa tribe, pass from the pages of history.

#### *The Final Stages of the War*

Deeper and deeper into the Big Cypress and Everglades the Indians were driven during the winter of 1840-41. They were not given a moment's peace. The whites closed in from every side, penetrating trackless swamps and marshes to find their hammock homes and gardens. Harried and hounded, many gave up the unequal struggle and surrendered.

By autumn of 1841 not many more than a thousand Indians remained in all Florida, including women and children. They were scattered over an area far larger than the state of Connecticut. No longer were they a real menace to white supremacy.

Nevertheless, the bloody Seminole War was not yet brought to a close. The fighting was continued simply because thousands of persons had no desire to see hostilities cease. They had a financial interest in the conflict.

Wealthy plantation owners were receiving fat sums each year from the federal government for labor their slaves performed for the troops. Hundreds of families of humbler means were receiving army rations. Volunteers who went with the federal troops were being paid in good cold cash. Fantastically high wages were being paid to civilian employees of all kinds. Grafters and profiteers were having a merry time, bleeding the government in wondrous style. As Historian Sprague reported: "Some of every class, every profession, the opulent as well as the humble

. . . had a pecuniary interest in the prolongation of the war. Money flowed in abundance."

Not wanting this golden flood to ebb, Floridians joined with greedy souls from other states in demanding that the war continue until the very last "bloodthirsty" redskin was exterminated or deported to the West.

The government and the nation as a whole was sick and tired of this war which seemed to never end but the demands for annihilation of the Indians or their unconditional surrender were so strident and so insistent, and came from such influential sources, that Washington officialdom felt they could not be ignored. So the war was prolonged.

Col. W. J. Worth, then commanding the federal troops in Florida, in mid-summer of 1841 ordered an intensification of the drives into the Big Cypress and Everglades from the north, west and south. Large, flat-bottomed cypress canoes were used to navigate the shallow waters.

Few Indians were captured on these raids simply because few of them were left. But the troops succeeded in devastating Indian territory. The record of one such expedition is interesting. It was made late in 1841 by Lieut. John T. McLaughlin. He reported: "With 200 men we ascended Shark River into the Everglades. Here we met Captain Burke of Artillery, with 67 men . . . Joining forces, we proceeded to Te-at-ka-hatchee and discovered two Indians in a canoe. The Indians escaped but we secured their packs, cooking utensils, provisions and their canoe. We followed them three days until the trail was lost. After destroying the growth of their fields, consisting of 50 to 60 acres of pumpkins, beans and peas, etc., we continued to sea."

To conduct more raids such as this one, Colonel Worth sent heavy reinforcements to the forts on the Caloosahatchee. Fort Dulany, at Punta Rassa, was made the principal base, supplies being unloaded there for transshipment up the river to Fort Denaud and Fort Thompson. To facilitate operations, many improvements were made to the Fort Dulany establishment. Large barracks and warehouses were constructed and a hospital was built. Within a month the fort was rated as one of the best in south Florida.

But Fort Dulany was doomed to destruction—not by the Indians but by the elements. On Tuesday, October 19, 1841, it was wiped out almost completely by a hurricane, one of the worst which ever hit the West Coast. All the buildings were demolished by the raging wind and the water which swept over the entire point, covering it many feet deep. Two soldiers were drowned. The others escaped by fleeing to higher ground before the storm reached its peak. The steamer Iris was blown ashore and left stranded in the middle of the fort grounds.

Capt. H. McKavitt, who was in command of four companies of the Eighth Infantry stationed at the fort, reported to Colonel Worth that his establishment had been so thoroughly destroyed that it would have to be entirely rebuilt. He asked for instructions. From Fort Brooke at Tampa, Colonel Worth sent word back to Captain McKavitt to go up

the Caloosahatchee and rebuild the fort at a place where hurricane damage was not apt to be so devastating.

Obeying orders, Captain McKavitt boarded a sloop and cruised up the river. He sought a spot which would be close to the Gulf and have water deep enough for schooners to come in, and yet would have sufficient elevation to be safe from tidal waves. He finally came to a place which he liked—a hammock densely covered with towering palms and pines and moss-draped oaks. He landed and camped there overnight. He learned that the land was high and dry and the air well cooled by a breeze blowing off the broad Caloosahatchee. Best of all, from a comfort standpoint, he discovered that there were almost no mosquitoes.

Convinced that he had located an ideal site for the fort, Captain McKavitt returned to Punta Rassa. On the following day, November 4, he brought his infantrymen back up the river and started immediately to erect fort buildings.

Captain McKavitt named the new post Fort Harvie in memory of Lieut. John M. Harvie one of his officers in the 8th Regiment who died September 7, 1841, a victim of malaria.

Fort Harvie was located on the present site of Fort Myers.

During the following winter Fort Harvie was the scene of great activity. Barracks, warehouses and a small hospital were constructed and the fort became the base for all operations south of the river.

But on March 21, 1842, Fort Harvie was abandoned. The long Seminole War was drawing to a close. Chief Coacoochee, called the Wildcat, the most brilliant Indian leader since Osceolo, had been deported to the West the preceding November with three hundred of his people and in February two hundred and thirty more Indians of all tribes had been rounded up and shipped away. Now, less than six hundred Indians remained in the entire territory and all excuse for prolonging the war was gone. The War Department ordered the army out, forts were abandoned and troops gleefully began returning to their homes.

Only one thing remained to be done: come to an agreement with leaders of the remaining Indians regarding the place they were to live. A meeting was called for August 14 at Fort Brooke and word was sent out for representatives of the various tribes to take part in the negotiations. Few responded. The still powerful head of the Mikasukis, Old Sam Jones, refused to leave his hiding place in the Glades. Otulka, the Prophet, had lost his power. Most of the other chiefs were either dead or had been deported.

The only important chief who still was active was Billy Bowlegs—the same Billy Bowlegs who led a band of Seminoles in the Caloosahatchee massacre in 1839.

With several lesser chiefs, Billy Bowlegs went to the Fort Brooke conference. Defiant and haughty, he refused to listen to any talk about deportation of the remaining Indians. Finally, after lengthy talks, arrangements were worked out for the Indians to occupy, at least

temporarily, the almost identical territory General Macomb had said they could have on May 17, 1839: southwest Florida from Charlotte Harbor and Peace River on the north, the center of Lake Okeechobee and Shark River on the east, and the Gulf of Mexico on the west. The Indians accepted the arrangement without hesitation.

The war was now declared officially ended. Colonel Worth reported to the War Department that only 301 Indians still remained in Florida. His estimate undoubtedly was too low. Even so, the once powerful Seminoles and their allies were practically decimated. While the war lasted, 3,930 were deported to the West and hundreds more were killed in battle or died from wounds, starvation or disease.

The seven-year war cost the federal government forty million dollars. It also cost the lives of 1,466 members of the federal army and several hundred Florida volunteers.

Time was to prove that the official ending of the war did not bring a complete end to hostilities. The conflict was to be resumed.

#### *Anti-Indian Feeling Continued*

Few persons in Florida rejoiced when the end of the war was officially announced August 14, 1842. The conclusion of hostilities meant that the federal government would stop spending millions in Florida each year and no one welcomed the prospect of the drying up of the golden flood. Moreover, no one welcomed the news that a few hundred Indians were to be allowed to remain and that a reservation had been assigned to them.

The fact that Colonel Worth had plainly stated that the reservation arrangement was only temporary did not soften the blow. Neither did the fact that the arrangement would undoubtedly save human lives—American lives. The feeling against the Indians was so bitter that almost everyone insisted that every Indian should be deported or killed.

Public wrath was not greatly appeased by an act passed by Congress on August 4, 1842. This act, called the Armed Occupation Act, stipulated that 160 acres anywhere south of Palatka and Gainesville would be given to each new settler willing to bear arms to defend his home for five years.

The purpose of this act of course was to encourage homesteading in the former war zone by hardy pioneers. In passing it, members of Congress argued that the possibility of another costly Indian war would be eliminated once the upper peninsula became thickly settled, and that rapid settlement could best be promoted by giving part of the public domain to persons willing to undertake their own defense.

The importance of the act has often been greatly exaggerated. The truth is that it had relatively little effect upon the development of Florida. True enough, several thousand persons migrated southward into the peninsula during the 1840's from north and west Florida and from

Georgia and Alabama. But comparatively few of them applied for home-stead lands. Most of the pioneers had never even heard of the Armed Occupation Act—they trekked southward simply because they knew the Seminole War was over and that a vast territory now was open for settlement by those who came first to take it.

It is quite possible that the Armed Occupation Act would have accelerated development more than it did if it had had a longer life. But it only lived one year. No applications for land were accepted after August 3, 1843.

The free land measure was killed because of vitriolic opposition. The plantation aristocracy of the South and reactionary northern Whigs ganged up against it, contending that people who did not have enough money to buy land did not deserve to get any. They branded the act as paternalistic and communistic. And lobbyists for big land speculators who wanted to grab the public domain for themselves put on the pressure. As a result, no extension of the deadline for making applications was granted and the act died a non-publicized death.

More than a small part of the opposition to the measure came from plantation owners of north Florida and from interests allied to them. The time was rapidly approaching when Florida was to be admitted to the Union as a slave state and already there was talk of soon splitting it up into two slave states, one of which would include the entire peninsula. To have the land occupied by non-slave-owning settlers would never, never do.

The slave owners had other plans. During the Seminole War they learned for the first time about the incredibly rich, incredibly deep muck-land of the Everglades; millions of acres as fertile, they were convinced, as the Valley of the Nile; land which, when drained, would be ideal for the growing of sugar cane and rice, better even than the richest river bottoms and deltas in the southland; land which would yield lush crops and return great profits when worked by slaves.

The burning desire of the slave owners to convert the endless expanses of the Glades into vast sugar and rice plantations was what gave birth to shrill, insistent demands that the Glades country be drained and reclaimed by the federal government or state.

However, the slave owners were smart enough to realize that they could not openly back the drainage proposal. The project must have wide public support before it could be approved and public support could be obtained only by making it appear that the drainage would benefit the general public and not just a favored few. So the slave owners carefully concealed their moves and worked behind the scenes. But through their friends in public office and in the newspapers they obtained results. It wasn't long before everyone was talking Everglades drainage and boosting for it.

The propagandists rarely mentioned that the mucklands of the Glades could be utilized profitably, at that time, only by growing sugar

cane or rice on plantations with gangs of Negro slaves to do the work. One of the propagandists declared that within five years after completion of the drainage the region would have a population of 100,000 souls or more. He did not add that a great majority of those 100,000 souls would be the souls of black slaves.

One of the results of the propaganda had a direct bearing on the history of Fort Myers. It kept alive and greatly intensified existing enmity against the Indians and culminated in the warning that Florida would never stand for giving even a square foot of that precious Glades land to the Indians as a reservation. It also added venom to earlier demands that the reservation already allotted temporarily to the Indians should be taken back and that every Indian should be killed or deported to prevent more reservation nonsense in the future.

The propaganda against the Indians became louder and louder, more and more hysterical. Congress was bombarded with it. "The Indians must go! They are menacing settlers' lives! They are a shiftless, worthless lot and are a menace to the state! They are holding Florida back! Remove the Indians and Florida will grow as Texas is growing and California! The Indians must go!"

Unquestionably the Indians had countless faults and many vices. They were not particularly loveable characters. And during the war they had been savagely vicious and cruel and had committed many crimes which could not be excused even on the grounds that they had been hard pressed, and often lied to and deceived, and had lost their sense of reason.

On the other hand it is also unquestionably true that after the war ended most of their misdemeanors and crimes were greatly exaggerated for propaganda purposes. Every time an Indian got steamed up on vile liquor sold to him illegally by an unscrupulous trader and went out and stole a hog, or robbed a hen roost or beat up the rascal who got him drunk, the propagandists made it appear as though he had gone on the warpath and all Florida was again imperilled. His villainous actions were ballyhooed throughout the state and the reverberations reached Washington.

Thus it was on July 17, 1849, a great outcry arose when a trader named Whiddon was killed by five Indians at his trading post on Peace River. No one inquired what motive the Indians had for committing the murder. No one asked whether Whiddon had cheated them beyond endurance or sold them so much rotten whiskey that they went amuck. The motive didn't matter. Neither did the fact that Billy Bowlegs captured the guilty Indians and brought them in for punishment. The hue and cry went on.

A few more widely separated crimes were reported throughout the state and always the Indians were held responsible. The cries for vengeance became so bitter and so intense that they could no longer be ignored by Washington. The War Department instructed Major General

David E. Twiggs, then in command of the Federal troops at Fort Brooke, to take action.

One of the first things he did was to order the re-establishment of a fort on the Caloosahatchee.

#### *Fort Myers Is Established*

Because General Twiggs ordered the Caloosahatchee fort built in 1850, the City of Fort Myers exists today. Therefore, the text of his order is of historic interest. It was issued through his assistant adjutant general W. W. Mackall at his headquarters on Tampa Bay on February 14 and read as follows:

"Brevet Major Ridgely, 4th Artillery, will take command of two companies of artillery heretofore detailed and proceed to the Caloosa River. He will select a suitable place for the establishment of a post and immediately throw up such light works as may secure his stores, and remove from the Indians any temptation to which his isolated position may give rise. The post will be called Fort Myers, by order of Major General Twiggs."

The general had an excellent reason for naming the new fort Fort Myers. His daughter Marion was in love with the gallant officer Col. Abraham C. Myers who was then chief quartermaster of the Department of Florida. Marion Twiggs had met the colonel in Texas when her father was commander of the federal forces there and his dashing manner and merry smile had won her heart. They were soon to be married. General Twiggs, to honor his prospective son-in-law and please his daughter, decided that it would be fitting and proper to give the name Myers to the fort.

Colonel Myers had an interesting, colorful career.

He was born in Georgetown, S. C., May 14, 1811, the son of Abraham Myers, an attorney and a descendant of Moses Cohen, the first rabbi of Charleston, S. C. He entered the United States Military Academy from South Carolina on July 1, 1828, and was graduated July 1, 1833. Appointed brevet second lieutenant, he was stationed at Baton Rouge.

Shortly after the outbreak of the Seminole War, he was transferred to Florida and served there for two years. In November, 1839, he became a captain in the quartermaster department and, after a brief service in the West, returned to Florida where he remained until the war was officially ended.

Transferred to the West again, he served under General Zachary Taylor in Texas and northern Mexico and was breveted major for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. He then was assigned to serve under General Winfield Scott and was breveted colonel for gallant conduct at Churubosco and was chief quartermaster of the Army of Mexico from April to June, 1848. During the next thirteen years, still in the quartermaster service, he was stationed at various posts in the Southern States. Seven years of that period were spent in Florida.

While in Florida, Colonel Myers was married to Marion Twiggs and their first child was named John Twiggs Myers. This son later became a brigadier general in the United States Marine Corps.

At the outbreak of the War Between the States, Colonel Myers was stationed at New Orleans and on demand of the state officials surrendered the quartermaster and commissary stores in his possession. Resigning his position in the United States Army, he was appointed lieutenant-colonel in the quartermaster general's department of the Confederate States Army, on March 16, 1861. A few days later he was appointed acting quartermaster general and was raised to the rank of colonel on February 15, 1862.

Called upon to provide all the supplies needed by the Confederate Army, Colonel Myers faced an almost impossible task. He built up an extensive organization of purchasing agents, post quartermasters, shops and supply depots but was never able to obtain everything that was needed due to conditions then prevailing in the South.

His bureau became the target of severe, unjustified criticism and on February 17, 1864, he was superseded by Brig. Gen. Alexander R.

Oct. 5, 1858.]

FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER.

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CAMP SUSQUEHANNAH,  
WILLIAMSPORT, PA.

In obedience to the orders of Governor Packer, Commander-in-chief of the Pennsylvania military, a camp of exercise was recently formed in that State, on which several thousands of citizen-soldiers were assembled during an entire week.

The ground chosen for the encampment was a field of one hundred and fifty acres, upon the farm of Justice H. C. Grier, one of the Judges of the Supreme Court, and an admirably suited for such a purpose. Eight hundred tents for privates and non-commissioned officers were erected, and two hundred wagons for staff and commanding officers, and a hospital was also fitted up with every convenience. The encampment lasted from Sept. 5 to Sept. 10, and twenty-eight military companies in all were upon the ground. The tent of the commanding officer, Gen. Jackson, was furnished with a telegraphic office, from which lines extended to different parts of the camp. A grand review was held on the afternoon of Sept. 9, at which three thousand troops were present. The arrangements of the camp were excellent, and everything provided is in a manner most satisfactory and creditable. Visitors from different parts of the State attended in great numbers, and a spacious temple was erected for their accommodation outside the lines.

BLOCK-HOUSE AT FORT  
MYERS.

This accompanying sketch is an admirable representation of the Block-house at Fort Myers, Florida. It was erected in the spring of 1856, from a plan submitted by Capt. Lieutenant J. M. Robertson, Second Artillery, in the discovery that it was a living animal, attached to



BLOCK-HOUSE AT FORT MYERS, FLORIDA.

It was found that the appendage consisted in two distinct parts, viz., the horny-looking stem inserted in the fish's back, which was an animal of the class Crustacea, bearing the name of *Pteryx*, (Balanus), the part inserted in the muscles of the fish was the head, and its attachment was secured by the projection of two rottish fangs or horns. The animals of this species have an independent existence, in the first stage of their being, and exist by means of articulated joints; but they soon fix themselves upon the external substance of some marine animal, as on the skin, gills, or eyes of lobsters, fish, &c., and pass the remainder of their lives as external parasites, sucking the juice of the unfortunate animal to which they have become fixed. This species is exclusively to sit upon the lobsters. Attached to the body of the parasite were a group of bacilli, which themselves acted as parasites upon the eggs contained in the flyingshells. They, however, derived no nourishment from the bacilli, but lived up in them, and were floating around them, while the parasites depended entirely for nutrition upon the unfortunate host.

A VISIT TO THE GRAVE  
OF A NEGLECTED  
POET

Two lonely afternoons during the past month of June, in company with two friends, I paid a visit to the tomb of one of America's greatest, but most neglected poets, Joseph H. Allen, taking the route Hudson, from which we waded up a distance of about five miles, over marshy ground, through Melrose in Hudson's

*Reproduction Courtesy of Dr. Mark Boyd, Tallahassee*

Fort Myers got its first national publicity in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly which on October 2, 1858, published the above picture of a Fort Myers' guard house and an article regarding its construction. The guard house was just one of fifty-three structures, large and small, located within the fort stockades.

Lawton who had even less success in supplying the army's needs. Grieving over his dismissal from the quartermaster's office, he went to Georgia where he lived in retirement until the close of the war. He then went to Europe where he lived in various countries until 1877 when he returned to the States. He died in Washington, D. C., on June 20, 1889.

### *The New Fort Is Established*

Obeying the orders of General Twiggs, Major Ridgely sailed from Fort Brooke, at Tampa, on Monday, February 18, with two companies of artillery. The "expeditionary force" arrived at Punta Rassa late Tuesday afternoon and pitched its tents on the site of Fort Dulany, which had been demolished by the hurricane of October 19, 1841, and then abandoned.

Early Wednesday morning the artillerymen re-embarked and sailed up the broad Caloosahatchee. Fifteen miles up the river Major Ridgely spied the ruins of Fort Harvie. Major Ridgely landed and looked the site over. He found that the buildings which had been erected there in the winter of 1841-42 had been almost completely destroyed by fires, probably set by revengeful Indians.

Despite the fact that the buildings had been burned, Major Ridgely decided to use the site for the new fort he had been ordered to build. It was the most beautiful spot he had seen along the river and its high, dry ground made him sure that it would be free from miasmic diseases, the scourge of the Americans who waged war against the Indians. The major also was pleased with the towering palms and pines, and the moss-draped oaks which stood beyond. A tiny creek trickled through the hammock and when Major Ridgely tasted the water he found that it was fresh and good.

The site for the fort determined, the major ordered his men ashore. They made camp and shortly after noon, the top branches of a tall, slender pine tree were cut off, a rope was hung and from the improvised flag pole the American flag was unfurled in the breeze.

That was on Wednesday, February 20, 1850. Fort Myers was born.

Major Ridgely had brought enough provisions to keep his force supplied for a fortnight. But none of the salt meat he had in his stores was touched for several days. For supper the first night, his men had fish, freshly caught in the river. In less than an hour, eight of the soldiers had brought in enough trout and red snapper to feed the two companies. Cooked over the camp fires, they tasted delicious.

Next morning, sentries reported that they had seen no signs of Indians but that they had spied at least a dozen deer a little after dawn going to a pond about a quarter mile away to drink. They said they also had seen many wild turkeys. Major Ridgely detailed two squads to go out on a hunting expedition, cautioning them to keep a sharp watch for Indians while looking for game. They brought in four deer and many

turkeys. After that, however, little game could be found near camp, the presence of so many men having frightened the wild animals and game birds away.

But there never was a shortage of fish, or of oysters, clams and turtles. As in the days of the Caloosas, several centuries before, the supply seemed inexhaustible.

For several weeks the soldiers stationed at Fort Myers were kept busy constructing barracks, officers' quarters, warehouses, and stables. Major Ridgely had not brought any horses when he first came but they arrived a week later and by that time stables for them had been provided.

All the buildings erected first at the fort were of a makeshift variety, thatched with palmetto fronds. More than a year elapsed before they were replaced by more substantially built, permanent structures.

Indians began coming to the fort a few days after the soldiers landed. Billy Bowlegs was one of the first arrivals. He was friendly and talked freely with Major Ridgely. He said that the Seminoles had established a number of settlements in the Big Cypress about thirty miles southeast of the camp and had planted gardens. They were satisfied with their new homes, he said, and wanted nothing more than to be left alone.

The eyes of Billy Bowlegs glinted when he said that his tribesmen did not want white people to come around and bother them. He was friendly but he obviously did not look favorably upon the establishment of the fort in the heart of what was supposed to be the Indian reservation. Undoubtedly he believed that the government now intended to resume operations against his people. He was not far wrong. Events were shaping up which were destined to make a renewal of hostilities inevitable.

During the summer of 1850 both houses of Congress debated the so-called Swamp Land Act which stipulated that swamps and overflowed lands were to be given to Arkansas and other states, including Florida, for reclamation purposes.

This was the measure which the slave owners had long been working for. It held a promise that their fond dreams of converting the Everglades into great sugar cane and rice plantations might soon come true. However, it could become a reality only if the Indians were ousted from the entire Glades region, their reservation taken from them, and surveys of the area made preliminary to carrying on drainage work. Consequently, more pressure had to be applied to get the Indians out.

The anti-Indian agitators soon had an excuse for putting on the heat. In August, 1850, a youth named Daniel Hubbard was murdered near Tampa. No one knew for sure who committed the crime but Indians were blamed. Three young Seminoles were caught and taken to Fort Brooke. Before they could be tried their dead bodies were found in the stockade, hanging from the limbs of trees. Did they hang themselves? Or were they lynched by Indian haters? What difference did it make? They were Indians; therefore, they were guilty!

Once more the cry went up: "The Indians must go! The Indians must go! Florida's future depends upon it!"

Washington reacted by sending instructions to General Twiggs to take all steps necessary for restraining the Indians. Twiggs, in turn, issued orders for the strengthening of the Fort Myers establishment. Two more companies were sent to the Caloosahatchee, along with a force of carpenters, brick masons and Negro laborers. This time there was to be nothing make-shift about the fort. The general's orders plainly stated that only the best materials were to be used and that all buildings must be constructed according to plans approved by the chief quartermaster of Florida, none other than Colonel Myers, after whom the fort was named.

During the next few years Fort Myers had a building boom, the first in the history of southwest Florida. Schooners and small steamers plied up and down the river. Negro laborers sweated as they carried the building materials to where they would be used. Axes bit into tree trunks as the clearing around the fort was extended up and down the river.

The first thing constructed was a substantial wharf built nearly one thousand feet into the river a little west of what is now the foot of Hendry street. At the end of the wharf there was a large platform, nearly a hundred feet long, where boats docked. Supplies were taken to shore on a tram car for which rails were laid.

After the wharf was completed building materials no longer had to be lightered ashore and construction work was speeded up. In rapid succession new buildings were erected: quarters for the officers, barracks for the enlisted men, administration offices, warehouses for the storage of munitions and general supplies, a guard house, a blacksmith shop and a bake shop, a laundry, a house for the gardener, and stables for the horses and mules. A sutler's store also was built. It was stocked and operated by James McKay, Sr., of Tampa. At this store officers and enlisted men bought almost anything they wanted from chewing tobacco to the finest brands of wines and whiskeys.

The framework for all the structures was made from heavy rough-hewn timbers of yellow pine, jointed together with wooden pegs. Part of one of the joints was salvaged eighty years later by R. V. Lee when the last of the fort buildings was demolished to make way for a hot-dog establishment. The wood was still as solid as when it came from the tree back in 1851.

The siding for all the buildings and also the flooring, doors and windows, and cedar shingles were all shipped in from Pensacola and Apalachicola. Brick also was brought in to make chimneys and to construct huge cisterns, one for the hospital built near the river north of what is now the foot of Royal Palm Avenue and the other just east of Hendry Street. This last cistern still remains, in 1948, buried in the ground beneath the old W. M. Hendry building at the rear of the Bradford Hotel.

The hospital deserves special mention. It was started in 1851 but not completed until several years later. The building was two and one-

half stories high and all the rooms were plastered. Capt. F. A. Hendry later said it cost \$30,000.

So much government money was spent on the fort during the 1850's that the War Department ordered an investigation. Major J. McKinstry went to the fort in April, 1856, and, after a thorough probe, reported that in his opinion "unnecessarily expensive buildings have been erected and that a lavish and uncalled for expenditure of public money has obtained at that post, particularly for the hospital building." (See Frontispiece.)

Major McKinstry included with his report detailed drawings of all the structures. It showed that fifty-seven separate buildings, large and small had been constructed. Two of the structures may have aroused the major's ire especially: a bowling alley and a bathing pier and pavilion which extended five hundred feet out into the Caloosahatchee.

#### *Fort Myers Was One of Florida's Finest*

As the number of buildings at the fort increased, more and more land was cleared of undergrowth and trees. Ultimately the clearing extended along the river from what is now Hough Street west to Monroe and back to Second. Most of the buildings were strung along the waterfront from Fowler to Dean. The barracks, however, were built farther back from the river, along the southern side of a large parade ground, about a hundred yards inside the stockade.

When finally completed the fort undoubtedly was one of the finest in all south Florida. It was described years later by Capt F. A. Hendry who visited it the first time in 1854.

"At that time," said Captain Hendry, "there was not a single settler or trace of civilization in the surrounding country. The fort presented a beautiful appearance. The grounds were tastefully laid out with shell walks and dress parade grounds and beautifully adorned with many kinds of palms. The velvety lawn was carefully tended. Special care was given to the rock-rimmed river banks. I beheld the finest vegetable garden I ever saw. It was the property of the garrison and the vegetables were supplied to the different companies in any quantities needed. Near the garden there was a grove of small orange trees.

"The long lines of uniformed soldiers with white gloves and burnished guns, and the officers with their golden epaulettes and shining side arms were grand and magnificent to behold.

"Captain McKay's sutlers store and the large commissary were well filled and tastily stored, amply supplying the soldiers' needs. The wagon yard and stables were exceptionally well kept and the horses and mules were as fat and sleek as corn, oats and hay could make them, and all were groomed to perfection. My pen would fail to describe the hospital with its light and airy rooms and so spotlessly clean. In that hospital scores of wounded and ill men were restored to health again.

"The officers and men were very courteous and kind and a more comfortable and happy set of men I never saw."

Wives of some of the officers lived at the fort. One was the wife of Capt. Winfield Scott Hancock who later became one of the North's most famous generals in the Civil War. Mrs. Hancock did not find the fort quite so perfect, from a woman's standpoint, as Captain Hendry pictured it.

"Our mail came from Tampa in a sail boat and, wind and waves permitting, was received once a week," Mrs. Hancock later wrote. "Commissary stores and other supplies came this same way and on one occasion, when a boat capsized with a load of stores, we were without some of the necessities of life for weeks.

"Gail Borden was unknown then and milk could be obtained only from the half starved, miserable Florida cows. Fort Myers could not boast of even such an animal and Mr. Hancock made four separate attempts before we could secure this luxury for our baby. The first cow strayed from the herd during the overland journey and never reached us; the second came by sea and while being landed at the dock fell overboard and broke her neck; the third was safely landed but wandered into the quicksand on the day of her arrival and so was lost. Persistency was finally rewarded and the fourth attempt was successful.

"During the rainy season the storms were frequently so severe and so prolonged that no fires could be lighted or cooking could be done in the camp. This was especially the case during the cold 'norther' peculiar to that time of the year. During this time I kept open house and the table was always stretched to its capacity. The officers drew lots for this privilege and chance decided who should be our guests at breakfast, luncheon and dinner."

Legend has it that a daughter was born to Captain and Mrs. Hancock while they lived at the fort. If the legend is correct, the child undoubtedly was the first white child born in what is now the City of Fort Myers.

Legend also has it that on the day the child was born Captain Hancock planted a date seed in front of the officers' quarters, located on the site of the present post office. The seed sprouted and in the years which followed the date palm became tall and magnificent. The Hancock daughter reportedly died when sixteen years old and the general and his wife returned to Fort Myers several times to see the palm because it reminded them of her. However that may be, the date palm became one of Fort Myers' most famous landmarks and when its heavy fronds dropped were picked up by tourists for use as walking canes or for historical momentos. The palm was blown over in a 1910 storm. In an effort to save it, Harvie E. Heitman propped it up again and braced it well. But in the hurricane of October 22, 1921, the palm was so badly damaged that it had to be removed.

#### *The Cost of Seminole Removal Runs High*

Life was peaceful at Fort Myers during the first half decade of the 1850's. Little happened to break the monotony. General Twiggs had issued stern warnings to the garrison to do nothing to anger the Indians

and precipitate another war. About the only thing the soldiers had to do was drill a little, groom the horses and mules, keep the fort grounds immaculate, and spend their leisure time fishing, hunting and wishing they were back home again.

The Indian-haters of Florida tried repeatedly to persuade the federal government to resume hostilities against the redskins but Washington officials flatly refused. Memories of the costly, bloody campaigns of the previous war were still too fresh.

Washington was willing, however, to meet the Florida demands half way. Federal officials would do what they could to remove the Indians from the state and send them to the West. But only if the removal could be effected by peaceful means—and not by war.

As a step in this direction the government in April, 1851, named a man named Luther Blake, of Alabama, as special Indian agent in Florida. Blake had made quite a reputation for himself by helping to remove the Cherokee Indians to a reservation and Washington officials believed he might be able to duplicate the performance in Florida.

The cost of Blake's services ran high. He was to be paid \$10,000 for expenses in addition to a liberal reward for each Indian he could persuade to leave the state: \$800 for each warrior and \$450 for each woman and child. The idea probably was that the Indians were to receive part of this money but, if so, Blake never bothered to mention it.

Blake, a boasting, blustering fellow, arrived in Fort Myers for the first time in May, 1851. He spent a week or so around the fort talking to friendly Indians who came in. He accomplished nothing. Then he departed, saying he was going to Arkansas to talk to the Seminoles on the reservation there. He said he would bring a group of them back with him to tell how much they liked the reservation and how well they were treated. After that, he said, it would be easy to persuade the Indians in Florida to join their brothers in the West.

Months passed. Somewhere Blake kept on living at government expense. He did not return to Florida until late in February, 1852. The Seminoles were still unwilling to depart. But Blake was not ready to give up, not so long as the government kept handing over his expense money. To prevent such a tragic calamity, he bombarded Washington with lengthy reports, bragging about the excellent progress he was making in negotiations with the Indians. It no time, he prophesied, the Indian problem would be settled.

During the summer Blake talked many times with Billy Bowlegs. But he could not convince the wily old chief that his tribesmen would be better off in Arkansas. Billy thought otherwise. His people, he retorted, were very well satisfied where they were and that was where they intended to remain. Hadn't Colonel Worth promised them, in 1842, that his tribesmen could stay in Florida? Was the government going to renege on its word again?

In September, however, Blake finally succeeded in persuading Billy to go with him to Washington to see the Great White Father who,

being all-wise, could tell Billy why it was necessary that the Seminoles should go West. Three other Seminoles went along.

Before the delegation left Fort Myers Billy was outfitted at McKay's store with a pair of boots and a pair of pants. It wouldn't be proper, Blake told him, for the chief of the Seminoles to appear before the Great White Father in his bare feet and minus a pair of pants! The other Seminoles were similarly outfitted to make them "decent."

Properly clothed, the delegation proceeded on to Washington, stopping at the best hotels along the way, Billy registering as "Mr. William B. Legs." At every stop the party was greeted by newspaper reporters who wrote lengthy articles about this fine move to solve the Florida Indian problem.

In Washington, Billy and the other Seminoles talked with Commissioner of Indian Affairs Luke Lea and finally signed an agreement to the effect that they were willing, at long last, to forsake Florida and move on to the West. As a reward for their conciliatory attitude they were treated to an excursion to New York during which Billy and the others bought many fine clothes—and sundry bottles of claret and French brandy. Blake, of course, didn't stint himself on luxuries and liquids. The excursion set Uncle Sam back \$600 but was considered well worth while.

Returning from his northern jaunt, Billy disappeared into the Big Cypress. Nothing came from the agreement he had signed in Washington. Perhaps he had had one drink too many of French brandy when he signed it and consequently soon forgot all about it. Perhaps his tribesmen were put out because they too hadn't been given a fine trip to Washington to see the Great White Father. Whatever the reason, the agreement was disregarded and the whole Indian problem was back where it started from.

Ultimately, however, Blake did have a little success. During the next six months he succeeded in persuading twelve Indian warriors and twenty-four women and children to make the western journey. The cost to the government was \$53,000. How much of that sum went to Blake and how much to the Indians has never been revealed.

Disgusted with Blake's slow, expensive progress, Washington gave him his walking papers in the spring of 1853 and turned the job over to Captain John C. Casey who had served as Indian agent before Blake took over.

For nearly a year Casey continued to try to come to terms with the Seminoles. But they stubbornly refused to listen to anything he had to say. They were determined to remain in Florida.

Pressed by the Indian haters to do something or step aside and let someone else do the job, Casey finally evolved a plan which seemed eminently satisfactory to everyone, particularly to those who hated the Indians most. It provided for no temporizing measures. It was cold-blooded, realistic and harsh.

The first phase of the plan provided for cutting off the Seminoles from all sources of supplies. Trading posts were to be closed and the Indians were to be prevented from entering settlements anywhere on the East Coast or on the keys. Nowhere were they to be permitted to obtain provisions or ammunition.

The second phase of the plan was even more drastic. A cordon of troops was to be thrown around the Indians and gradually drawn in, pressing the redskins into a smaller and smaller area. All the roads constructed by General Zachary Taylor in 1838 and 1839 were to be reopened and new ones promptly constructed to provide quick access to the Glades and Big Cypress. Scouting parties should systematically encroach upon the Indians' lands. And, finally, surveying parties should be sent into the Indian territory to let them know that civilization was advancing, and settlers on the way.

The ultimate objective of Casey's plan was crystal clear. The Indians would be goaded into warfare. But what difference would that make? By that time the supplies and ammunition of the Indians would be almost exhausted, their resistance would soon be broken, and the conflict would be over.

Casey's plan was presented to a new secretary of war, Jefferson Davis, on May 3, 1854. Davis' sympathies were all with the Indian-hating plantation owners who were leading the fight to get the Seminoles removed and he promptly endorsed the plan. Trade with the Indians was soon suspended and the program of gradual strangulation launched. During the following winter troops were sent to Fort Denaud, Fort Thompson and Fort Center, all of which had been established in 1839 and abandoned three years later. Now these forts were rebuilt and enlarged.

Reinforcements also were sent to Fort Myers. And then, in 1855, the War Department's topographical engineers were ordered to proceed with the task of making surveys in the Indian territory.

On December 7, 1855, Lieut. George L. Hartsuff left Fort Myers with a party of eleven men for a surveying expedition into the Big Cypress. Twelve days later, just as the crew was preparing to return, the men ran across Billy Bowlegs' garden.

"Let's tear the hell out of it and see what Billy does," yelled one of the men. The others thought it was a fine idea. So they trampled down the banana stalks, smashed the pumpkins growing nearby and uprooted the potatoes. Soon afterward, Billy returned. He was enraged. And when he demanded compensation, Hartsuff's men laughed uproariously. What a joke! They tripped Billy and sent him sprawling. When he arose, his face was covered with dirt. Then the whole camp roared. Seething with anger, Billy left.

But in the early hours of Thursday, December 20, Billy returned. With him was a small band of Seminoles. They attacked Hartsuff's camp just as dawn was breaking. Caught completely by surprise, two of the surveying crew were killed. Hartsuff and three of his men were wounded.

The survivors finally beat off the Indian band and made their way back to Fort Myers. Hostilities had started again.

There is no doubt but that the Indians would have gone on the war-path again even if the wanton destruction of Billy's banana patch had not occurred. Casey's plan had worked out just as he said it would. The Indians had been so goaded into desperation that they would have struck back sooner or later even though the garden had been let alone. Its destruction was merely the spark that exploded the Indian powderkeg.

Once aroused, the Indians lost all reason. Small bands struck out into the white man's country, pillaging, shooting, burning as they went. One band went as far north as Fort Meade. Another circled the eastern edge of Lake Okeechobee. A third group reached the Manatee River and attacked Braden's Castle, the home of Dr. Joseph Braden. They were beaten off there but struck again at the home of William Whitaker on Sarasota Bay and burned it to the ground.

The depredations undoubtedly would have been far worse than they were had it not been for the fact that the Florida Indians were almost a vanished race. In the entire state there were less than six hundred. And that total included women and children, cripples and men too old to fight. The number of warriors did not exceed a hundred and fifty.

The contest which followed, therefore, cannot be dignified by calling it a war. A few minor engagements and skirmishes were fought but the principal work of the soldiers consisted of hunting the Indians in the swamps and marshes, deep in the Glades and almost impenetrable fastness of the Big Cypress. But that was grueling, dangerous work. The Indians were desperate, and tricky, and venomously angry. They shot to kill—and their aim was accurate.

To conquer them would not be easy.

#### *They Were the Undefeated*

A tall, raw-boned man with tireless muscles, Colonel Harvey Brown of the 2nd Artillery had no liking for the type of operations called for in this renewed conflict with the Seminoles. A veteran of the Mexican War, he was a soldier, a fighter who liked nothing better than to meet his enemy in open battle—and let the best side win.

But now, as commander of the troops stationed at Fort Myers, he was called upon to wage a campaign utterly unlike any he had ever waged before. This campaign did not call for soldiers trained to meet their enemies face to face. It called for human bloodhounds. And Colonel Brown had no desire to change his ways and adopt bloodhound tactics.

In the beginning he believed that standard methods could be employed. When the survivors of Lieutenant Hartsuff's surveying crew staggered into Fort Myers, blood-stained and weary, the colonel immediately sent out companies of artillery and infantry to track down Billy Bowlegs' men and engage them in battle.

But Colonel Brown soon learned that Billy had no intentions of ordering his warriors into a major engagement—and be annihilated. The crafty old chief adopted far different tactics. He split up his men into small bands. Some ranged far afield to pillage and burn; others remained behind to lay in ambush, wait for scouting parties to come along, and then strike and vanish. Women and children, and men too old to fight, were sent deep into the Big Cypress to secret places where no white men had ever gone. Herds of cattle owned by the Indians were left behind to feed on the prairies.

Confronted by such strategy, Colonel Brown was bitter and disgusted. He wanted to fight the war and get it over with. But instead he was expected to follow the scent of warriors, and the Indian women and children, through sawgrass taller than a man, through snake-infested swamps and marshes where soldiers bogged down at every step, through dense hammock growths of poisonous weeds and vines, through a miasmic wilderness where mosquitoes stung and blinded and where fevers and pneumonia were deadly foes. No, Colonel Brown did not like this type of warfare and neither did his men. But they had to wage it just the same.

Repeatedly Colonel Brown sent out scouting parties. They rarely found the Indians—but the Indians often found the scouts. When the Americans least suspected that the redskins were near, rifles cracked, and men went down, some to rise no more. And when the soldiers rallied to fight the Indians off, no Indians could be seen. They had wriggled like snakes into the sawgrass and were gone.

Early in January, 1856, Lieut. Ralph R. Benson left Fort Myers with a squad of twenty men. At the edge of the Big Cypress the party was ambushed. Two of Benson's men were killed and eight wounded. The lieutenant himself was shot through the shoulder and nearly bled to death. No Indians were killed because none were seen.

A few months later a band of Indians ambushed a wagon train three miles from Fort Denaud. The teamsters and mules were killed and the wagons burned. The redskins made off with the guns and ammunition.

There were many other skirmishes and ambushments south of the Caloosahatchee. Sometimes the bodies of the American dead were buried where they fell; usually, however, they were carried on wagons to Fort Myers and placed in a cemetery at the edge of the clearing. The bodies of many other soldiers, victims of fatal wounds or disease, also were buried there. One was the body of Capt. W. H. Fowler, of the 1st Artillery. His grave, carefully walled with stones, was discovered in 1885 when Capt. F. A. Hendry opened a new street through that section. The street was named in Captain Fowler's memory—Fowler Street. The remains of all the American dead were moved at that time, 1885, to national cemeteries by the federal government.

Army officers realized early in 1856 that a conflict such as this could not be fought by orthodox army methods. None knew this better than General William S. Harney, then in command of all the federal

troops in Florida. After the massacre of his men on the Caloosahatchee sixteen years before, Harvey, then a colonel, had fought the Indians countless times and won a splendid reputation. But he had learned that the redskins could be vanquished only one way: by tracking them to their secret lairs, burning their homes, destroying their crops, killing those who resisted, and capturing those who didn't, women and children as well as warriors.

But Harney also knew that regular army men were of little value in this bloodhound type of warfare, at least not until after they had been given months of special training. And there was no time or money for that. The job could be done much better, he decided, by Florida volunteers accustomed to the swamps and marshes. They would go anywhere and do anything, Harney knew, providing they were rewarded financially for their efforts.

To spur on the volunteers, the War Department approved a plan sponsored by Harney for paying a reward for each Indian captured: \$500 for warriors and \$100 for women and children.

As a result of this offer three companies of Florida volunteers were formed. They averaged forty-five men each. They were called boat companies because they went through the Glades country in long, flat-bottomed steel boats, each large enough to hold sixteen men with all their supplies. These Indian hunters were brave men and endured the greatest hardships but they were not much to look at. They were described in 1886 by Capt. James Murphy in an article in the Philadelphia Times.

"Two companies of Florida volunteers acted with the regulars in an expedition from the shores of Lake Okeechobee in 1857," Captain Murphy said. "They were a sorry looking set of ragamuffins alongside of Uncle Sam's troops. Nearly all of them shook with ague, were raw-boned, had yellow, emaciated faces and were clad in butternut suits. Their hair was long, thin and straight. Their head coverings were old, broad-brimmed hats."

"Mounted on wretched looking beasts, both men and animals appeared as though they were in the last stages of consumption. The morning they came into Fort Center they resembled a ragged funeral procession. The animals were picketed to ropes the men carried with them and they talked to their horses in a confidential manner about rations. They departed across the lake in flatboats."

Not all the volunteers were such ragamuffins, particularly not one "Captain" Jacob E. Michler, as colorful a frontiersman as ever drew bead on a redskin. He appeared one day at Fort Center near Lake Okeechobee and said he had been sent by General Harney to serve as a guide for Company C. Captain Murphy, who served in Company C, described him well:

"He was a remarkable man, about medium height, slightly built but sinewy and active. He was dressed in a blue flannel shirt, sky-blue overalls tucked into the legs of a long pair of boots. On his head was a broad white felt hat. His complexion was dark. His eyes were coal

black. They sparkled like diamonds and were deeply penetrating. His hair was long and heavy; a black mustache covered his lips. He carried a rifle on his shoulder and by his side hung a beaded shot-bag. On the other side, suspended from his shoulder, was a large hammock with double flaps. He was eating an orange when he appeared among us. He asked in a drawling voice for the officer in command."

Michler not only was a dead shot but a remarkably good poker player. He raked into his shot-bag almost all the money the soldiers had and sent a lot of it to his mother in St. Augustine. His principal delight was getting into a canoe, stealing alongside a big alligator, and sending a bullet into its head. He was a fearless snake hunter too. Armed with a long, sharp pole he would spear a rattlesnake, lift the wriggling reptile in the air and exclaim: "That snake sure would be dangerous if he bit a fellow."

Michler did not get along well with the major commanding the company. One day while cruising on Lake Okeechobee, Michler saw Indian signs on a small island. He asked to go ashore. The major told him to hold his tongue. Michler pulled out his revolver and forced the officer to have him taken to the mainland with his haversack, shot-bag and gun. He disappeared in the sawgrass and made his way to Tampa, a hundred miles to the northwest.

Back at Fort Brooke, Michler told Harney about this quarrel with the major and got permission to form his own company, promising to "bring the Indians out of the Everglades in two months." He paid the men who joined him out of his poker winnings. He also bought a new fine outfit for himself. Just before he left for the Glades, Company C marched in from Fort Center. There its men saw Michler again. They hardly recognized him.

"While the men were resting under the shade of beautiful oak trees," Murphy related, "a gentleman of elegant appearance walked among them. He wore a spotless suit of white flannel. From a shirt bosom as white as snow blazed a magnificent diamond solitaire. A pair of patent leather shoes, white silk stockings and a large Panama hat of the finest texture completed his dress. His black hair and mustache were neatly trimmed. The stranger was Jacob Michler who had come to see his former associates in hardships."

The paths of Company C and Michler crossed a third time. The meeting occurred at Fort Myers. "The garrison turned out to see a novel sight," Captain Murphy said. "First came a horseman with all the trappings of a wild Indian chief, with beautiful bead-work, leggings, belt, sash and shot pouch. His head was decked with feathers. All he needed was war paint to make him an Indian chief in reality. It was Jacob Michler with his Florida regiment."

Behind him straggled a group of Indian women and children. A few of the women had papooses on their backs. Michler had made the capture at the island on Lake Okeechobee where he had seen the Indian signs months before. Records show that Michler was paid \$1,500 for his

captives—\$100 each for nine women and six children. He had captured no warriors. The Indians were taken later to the federal stockade at Egmont Key, in the mouth of Tampa Bay.

Other boat companies did not have Michler's success in capturing Indians; none came up to the expectations of General Harney. During all of 1857 not more than thirty redskins were rounded up. Billy Bowlegs and his warriors were as elusive as ever. Once he was almost trapped by a scouting party led by Capt. John Parkhill. But he got away—and Parkhill lost his life and five of his men were wounded.

The secretary of war was forced to admit in 1857 that the Seminoles "had baffled the energetic efforts of our army to effect their subjugation and removal." James Buchanan, the new president, decided to change the government policy. He could see no sense in continuing the bloody, expensive hostilities and issued orders for making new efforts to remove the Indians by peaceful means.

One great bar to emigration had been removed by the preceding administration during the year before. Separate tracts of lands in Arkansas had been awarded to the Seminoles and Creeks and the traditional enemies now could live apart. Hoping that this new arrangement might erase old animosities and cause the Florida Indians to change their mind about leaving, government officials had Chief Jim Jumper and some of his tribesmen brought to Florida from the reservation.

The delegation arrived in Tampa in August, 1857. "They were fine looking men but their style of dress was most amusing," wrote John A. Bethell many years later. "Chief Jumper wore a high crown black beaver hat, a pair of brogan shoes, striped ticking pants, red top shirt and a blue blouse. The rest were dressed just as comically."

Bethell, author of "The History of Pinellas Peninsula," was a mate of the little steamer "Texas Ranger" which took the Indian delegation down the coast. The first stop was made at Fort Myers where it was hoped Billy Bowlegs could be contacted. But Billy could not be persuaded to come to the fort; he sent word that he would meet the delegation on Caxambas River, some fifty miles south of Fort Myers. The Texas Ranger moved on to the suggested meeting place and the Indians from the West were put ashore. They reappeared a month later at Fort Myers —alone.

Chief Jumper reported that he had done his best to persuade Billy to go West with his people but had failed. He said he had told Billy that the Seminoles and Creeks now lived apart and that the government had promised to give the Indians on the reservation money enough to buy everything they wanted, and more besides. But Billy Bowlegs had no faith in government promises. He told Chief Jumper that he would wait and see.

Strangely enough, however, the government finally did keep its promises to the Indians on the Arkansas reservation. The Creeks were given \$1,000,000, of which \$600,000 was in cash, \$200,000 was invested

for them, and \$200,000 more invested but held back until they helped get the Seminoles out of Florida. The government was almost equally generous with the reservation Seminoles. They were given \$69,000 in cash, \$7,000 more each year for ten years, and \$500,000 was invested for them. Of this last amount, \$250,000 was withheld until they were joined by the Florida Seminoles.

The Arkansas Seminoles and Creeks now had a strong inducement to persuade Billy Bowlegs and his people to migrate to the West and they agreed to cooperate wholeheartedly with Colonel Elias Rector, superintendent of Indians affairs in Arkansas, in a new move to reopen negotiations.

Rector arrived at Fort Myers in February, 1858. With him were forty Seminoles and six Creeks from the reservation. They camped on the bank of the river a little east of the army hospital. There they waited for weeks, while efforts were being made to persuade Billy Bowlegs to come to the fort. Finally he agreed to come in after being given solemn promises that he would be released immediately after the meeting ended.

The all-important meeting was held March 4 on the hospital grounds. Billy was a shrewd bargainer. Rector said of him later: "He is a personage with whom little can be done without money and nothing without plain speaking." The terms finally agreed upon were fairly generous. Billy was to get \$5,000 in cash as a gift and \$2,500 for his claims for cattle which he said had been stolen from him. Each warrior was to receive \$1,000 and each woman and child \$100. Arrangements also were



*Photo Courtesy of Mrs. W. Stanley Hanson*

Whole families of Seminole Indians came to Fort Myers in days gone by to sell alligator hides and plumes—and purchase food, and sewing machines, and cloth used in making their gayly colored costumes.

made for purchasing all animals and other property the Indians possessed.

With the terms settled, Billy left the fort. He said he would return two weeks later and report how his people looked upon the proposal. On March 27 he reappeared and announced that the terms had been accepted. The Seminoles at last were willing to leave the peninsula.

A few days later small groups of Indians began arriving at the fort, some on horses and some on foot—women with papooses on their backs, almost naked children, crippled old men, and a sprinkling of warriors. A camp was set up on the creek about a mile north of the fort close to where the Fort Myers Cemetery is now located. Because this was the spot where Billy's people surrendered, the creek was always called thereafter "Billy's Creek."

By May 1 a total of 124 Indians had come to the camp, all that Billy could persuade to move West. Approximately three hundred and fifty still remained, scattered over the entire peninsula. Billy said many would come in later. But Rector could not afford to remain much longer; the rainy season was coming on and the Indians already in the camp were becoming restive.

The day of departure arrived—Tuesday, May 4, 1858. Down to the wharf the Seminoles walked, some sad and dejected, others sullen, many defiant, and a few who seemed to be looking forward to the long journey which was ahead. They boarded the steamer "Grey Cloud," the whistle was blown, the ship moved out into the current and went swiftly down the river.

As the ship departed, farther and farther down the Caloosahatchee, the Indians stood by the rails, bidding a silent, last farewell to the land they had thought was theirs.

Enroute to the West, the "Grey Cloud" stopped at Egmont Key where forty-one more Indians were taken on board. These were the Indians which had been captured by the federal troops and by the Florida volunteers.

The federal government later reported that the expense of removing Billy Bowlegs and his people from Florida amounted to \$70,352.14.

Colonel Rector returned to Fort Myers the following January in the hope of picking up some of the Indians who had been left behind. The fort had been evacuated by the federal troops the preceding June. Coming ashore, Colonel Rector established himself in the empty officers' quarters and during the next few weeks talked to small groups of Indians who straggled in. By offering them the same inducements he had offered Billy Bowlegs, he persuaded seventy of them to go with him. He departed on February 12, 1859.

The group of Indians which went with Rector was the last to be deported from the state. The others were allowed to remain. They totalled probably about three hundred—no one knows and no one ever

will know the exact number. One of those who stayed was old Sam Jones, once leader of the powerful Mikasukis. Now 108 years old, almost blind but still filled with hatred toward the whites, he refused to leave his home deep in the Glades.

Those who remained behind were the undefeated. But now they did not possess an acre they could call their own. They had no rights as citizens; legally they were trespassers on others' land. Not until 1917, while the United States was fighting to make the world safe for democracy, did the State of Florida set aside 100,000 acres for them as a reservation—100,000 acres of swamp, and sawgrass, and wilderness.

Since Billy Bowlegs and his people left Fort Myers, ninety years have passed into history. But never again did any of the Seminoles, or any of their allies, venture forth again to challenge their white conquerors. Today a few of them come in to Fort Myers to buy supplies they need; others can be seen by tourists who zip along the Tamiami Trail. But most of them still mistrust the white man and remain hidden in their camps, far from the beaten roads.



## CHAPTER III

### WHEN CATTLEMEN WERE KINGS

FLORIDA'S SCRUB COW of yesteryear was definitely not one of God's most magnificent creatures. Even at her best she was undersized and skinny. After a long, dry season, when the grass upon the prairies became scant and tough, her appearance was pathetic. Protruding bones looked as though they would pierce her drab, tick-covered hide. Her head hung in weariness and dejection. Her flesh was stringy and tough as alligator hide.

For all that, the scrub cow of yesteryear played an important role in the development of southwest Florida in general and the Fort Myers area in particular during the decades following the cessation of hostilities with the Indians.

The origin of the scrub cow, and her countless brothers and sisters, is a matter open to debate. Some people say that the cattle were descendants of a small herd brought into Florida by Hernando de Soto in 1539. When the conquistador departed northward in his quest for gold, 'tis said, he left the cattle behind and they multiplied until their number became legion.

That's a romantic conjecture but probably not correct. The chances are that the first cattle grazed on the peninsula much later than the sixteenth century. Perhaps the progenitors of the great herds of latter years were brought to Florida by Spanish missionaries; perhaps they were strays taken by the Indians from Georgia herds when they fled south to escape the white man; perhaps the British brought them when they occupied Florida from 1763 to 1783. The evidence is conflicting.

In all events, it's a matter of record that thousands of head were owned by the Indians when the United States got Florida from Spain. The cattle were the Indians' most prized possession.

As the Indians were pressed farther and farther southward by the oncoming whites, they took most of their cattle with them, down into the central part of the upper peninsula and then into the valleys of the Myakka, Peace and Kissimmee rivers, and then still southward to the land below the Caloosahatchee.

In the drives southward the Indians were forced to leave some of their cattle behind. These were rounded up and branded by the white settlers from Georgia, Alabama and the Carolinas who usually brought with them herds of their own. As the years passed, the herds increased greatly in size and by the time the Civil War began Florida was one of the leading cattle states in the South. The largest herds, of course, were in the upper half of the peninsula, white cattlemen having not yet penetrated much farther south.

With the beginning of hostilities, the Confederate Army started making heavy inroads on Florida herds. Meat provided by the scrubs may have been stringy and tough but it was better than no meat at all. Besides, the cattle were urgently needed for their hides and tallow.

Herds in North Florida were bought up first. Then, as the war dragged on and the demand for cattle became greater and greater, the herds farther down the peninsula were tapped. From as far south as the Manatee and Fort Meade regions, cattle were driven northward to the railroad close to the Georgia border. Often the drives required thirty days or more. Usually they were made under the blazing summer sun and the cattle, lean to begin with, "drifted" as much as a hundred pounds on the hard journey.

Not all the Florida cattle went to the Confederate Armies by any means. The Confederacy paid from \$8 to \$10 a head; in Cuba, the same cattle brought as much as \$30, not in paper money which might soon become worthless, but in good Spanish gold. The inevitable resulted. Some of the largest cattlemen and cattle buyers began dealing with blockade runners, the lure of quick and easy profits being stronger than their loyalty to the Southern cause.

The blockade runners were men who had sailed ships along the West Coast for years as traders or as fishermen and knew all the keys, and inner bays, and hidden channels as well as a mailman knows his route. They were past masters in the fine art of evading watchful eyes of the Federal blockading squadrons. Before the war ended some of them were caught, of course, but others operated until the very end and became wealthy.

Few of the pioneer settlers on the peninsula frowned upon blockade runners, even though it deprived the Confederate Armies of thousands of head of sorely needed cattle. Their sympathies were with the South but they were in desperate need of all kinds of clothing and many items of food, salt and tobacco. These precious commodities no longer could be purchased except at prices which were prohibitive; they could be obtained only from the blockade runners who accepted cattle in payment.

It was only natural, therefore, that the blockade runners were looked upon as true patriots of the Confederacy. Perhaps they were. They did at least help to keep up the morale of the Florida people and keep them in the war on the Confederate side.

Realizing this, the Federals did everything possible to break up the blockade running. Large squadrons of sloops and gunboats patrolled West Coast waters. One of their bases was on Egmont Key in the mouth of Tampa Bay. Another was on Sanibel Island in San Carlos Bay, at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee. The Federals hampered the movements of the blockade runners but did not succeed in putting them out of operation.

In another move to halt their activities, the Federals decided on a rear guard movement to stop the flow of cattle toward the coast. This could be done, they reasoned, by establishing a fort somewhere on the

edge of the cattle country which could be used as a base for raids far into enemy territory. The raids would reduce the number of cattle available for the blockade runners and for the Confederate armies as well. The captured cattle would be used to feed the men in the blockading squadrons and also in the large garrison at Key West.

The Federals had still another reason for wanting to establish a fort in the rebel zone. They had received reports that there were hundreds of Union sympathizers in South Florida who would welcome the chance to find a haven of refuge under the Northern flag. A small group of such sympathizers already had gone to Key West and formed a company known as the Florida Rangers. Many others would join them, the Rangers said, at the first opportunity.

Having reached the logical conclusion that a fort was needed, the Federals immediately made arrangements for re-occupying Fort Myers, abandoned in June, 1858, at the conclusion of action against the Indians.

Five companies of regular Federal troops and the small company of Florida Rangers moved into the fort late in December, 1863, and all the munitions and provisions needed were brought in from Key West. The buildings were found to be in excellent condition, despite the fact that they had been abandoned four and one-half years.

As a means of defense, a breastwork was immediately built of earth and logs. It was about fifteen feet wide at the base and seven feet high and extended in the shape of a crescent from the eastern edge of the hospital grounds to about five hundred feet below the wharf. This would be from near the present Edison bridge to about the present Monroe Street.

The fort did not prove to be the popular haven of refuge for Union sympathizers which had been predicted. Only a few showed up during the months which followed. The obvious reason was that most sympathizers had no desire to be linked up too closely with the Federal cause; to do so meant that their homes and possessions would be confiscated by the Confederates.

As a base for cattle raids the fort proved to be eminently worth while, from a Northern viewpoint. Capt. F. A. Hendry, who served on the Confederate side, stated years later that the raids were "frequent and destructive, causing much distress to the devotees of the Southern cause." He estimated that between January 1, 1864, and the end of the war at least 4,500 head of cattle were taken by the Federals, many from as far away as the Fort Meade district.

Captain Hendry didn't say so but there are good grounds for believing that many of the raids were raids in name only. More than a few cattlemen, during the last year of the war, came to the conclusion that Yankee gold or even greenbacks were much more desirable than the rapidly depreciating Confederate currency and consequently, made secret deals with the Federals for cattle they owned. When troops came to drive the cattle away, the owners turned their eyes the other way—

after collecting—and then reported later to the Confederates that the "damnyankees" had made another successful raid.

Enough actual raids were made, however, to warrant the organization by the Confederates of the Cattle Guard Battalion, commonly known as the "Cow Cavalry." This was really a home guard outfit and was made up largely of settlers who had previously been exempted from service because they owned 500 head of cattle or more, and were needed at home to guard their property. As members of the "Cow Cavalry" they could continue the home guard activity and at the same time have "soldier status" in case they were captured. By the end of 1864 the battalion consisted of nine companies and was commanded by Colonel Charles J. Munnerlyn.

Early in 1865 Colonel Munnerlyn became so irked by the raids out of Fort Myers that he decided that the fort must be captured and destroyed. To accomplish this feat he sent out a force of 275 men armed with one field piece under the command of Major William Footman. The major approached the fort on February 21 and formally demanded its surrender within twenty minutes. His demand ignored, the major opened fire with his one piece of artillery. All day long the "attack" continued with the Federals answering with their three field pieces. By nightfall, the major concluded that the fort could not be captured as easily as Colonel Munnerlyn had expected, and withdrew. He succeeded only in capturing a few horses and a couple of pickets. The fort at that time was garrisoned by five companies of well trained men so the major's decision to withdraw was undoubtedly wise.

There is in existence a lurid, almost unbelievable account of the capture of ten Federal pickets at Billy's Creek by a detail of ten Confederates the day before the fort was attacked.

"Determined that the pickets must be captured," the account goes, "Major Footman ordered Lieut. William Marion Hendry to select from the whole battalion ten men and make a dash upon the picket post. The order was positive to capture the pickets without the fire of a gun if possible. This was a dangerous procedure; ten men attacking ten men all well armed, with a position carefully selected. The instructions were, when within a half mile of that point, to dash off at full speed and keep up that speed until they dashed into the picket camp. Well does the writer remember seeing the water fly from under the heels of the chargers in that dash and the spirit and determined look of these cavalrymen. No more daring charge was made during the great war. There was not a gun fired and every picket was trotting back to the rear in a few minutes, prisoners of war."

The tale has all the earmarks of being embellished by imagination. Either that or else the pickets wanted to be captured, the same as many Germans did in the closing days of both World Wars. The story is repeated here only because it has become a part of Fort Myers lore.

The same person who told that tale also reported that the Federals in the Fort became so alarmed by Major Footman's attack that they packed up that night and "scurried down the river to Punta Rassa where they placed themselves under the protection of Federal gunboats." Army records show, however, that the fort was not abandoned until June, 1865, several months after the war ended.

Some of the cattle captured by raiders from the fort while the war was on were slaughtered at Fort Myers to supply meat for the garrison. Most of them, however, were driven overland to Punta Rassa where they were loaded on transports and taken to Key West. The trail followed on these cattle drives was the one which had been blazed in 1838 by Col. Persifer F. Smith during the war against the Indians. It was rarely used during the years which followed and traces of it had almost vanished in many places. Now, however, it became tramped down and so well defined that it was followed by cattlemen for many years after the Civil War ended.

More than a trail was left as a result of the Civil War cattle drives. A long wharf was built at Punta Rassa to facilitate the loading of cattle on the transports. A large barracks also was constructed to house the men handling the loading operations. It also served as a land base for the Sanibel Island blockading squadron. Many writers have erroneously stated that the barracks was built during the Seminole War. That is not the case. Official records show that it was constructed in 1864.

The barracks, which was destined to play an important part in the later development of Fort Myers, was a most unusual building. It was about a hundred feet long and fifty feet wide and gave the appearance of having been chopped in two. A row of rooms faced the water from the second floor where the other face of a roof should have been. Many years later, when the barracks had been converted into a sportsmen's hotel, the water-facing rooms were occupied by millionaire anglers from the North and were facetiously referred to as "Murderers' Row."

To prevent the barracks from being swept into the sea like the Fort Dulany barracks was in the 1839 hurricane, army officers constructed the new building on fourteen-foot piles, leaving a great open space underneath. Cattlemen later made this place their favorite hang-out and played poker there, and drank aguardiente, to their heart's content. The floor above eventually became riddled with bullets fired by the cow-hunters when they worked up too much steam through handling the jugs of Cuban rum.

Despite the high pilings, the barracks almost suffered the same fate as its predecessor during the great hurricane of October 6, 1873. The sea swept over the entire point and over all adjacent islands and everyone sought refuge in the building. When the storm was at its peak, the water rose to within a few inches of the floor. The refugees in the building passed a fearful night but early in the morning the water began to subside and the danger was over.

*Punta Rassa Takes the Spotlight*

Uncle Sam had great aspirations after the Civil War was ended. He wanted to extend his influence to the West Indies and Central America. And as a part of the general program of trade expansion, he encouraged the construction of a cable from Florida to Havana.

All this had a direct bearing on the development of the Fort Myers area inasmuch as the cable terminated in Florida at Punta Rassa.

The cable was laid by the International Ocean Telegraph Company which later was absorbed by the Western Union. The company took over Punta Rassa late in 1866 under the provisions of an act of Congress of July 24, 1866, which permitted any telegraph company "to take and use public land necessary for the stringing of lines or the establishment of stations."

The relay station was established in the army barracks thereby becoming, in point of space occupied, the largest telegraph station in the world. A young telegraph operator from Newark, N.J., George R. Shultz, came to Punta Rassa with two assistants to operate the station.

When they arrived, early in 1867, no white settlers lived anywhere near. But they were not lonely. During the last year of the Civil War cattlemen all over South Florida had learned that Punta Rassa, with its deep water close to shore, was an ideal cattle shipping point. They began driving their cattle there for shipment to Key West and Cuba within a few months after the war ended.

The advantages of Punta Rassa were first recognized by Jacob Summerlin, one of the largest cattle owners of the state and certainly one of the most colorful.

When a young man, Summerlin inherited twenty Negroes valued at more than \$1,000 each. Interested in cattle and not in plantation life, he traded the Negroes for 6,000 head owned by a Tampa cattleman. His herds grazed in the vast plains and flatwood pine lands surrounding Fort Meade and by the time the Civil War started, they had increased so rapidly that he was able to market several thousand steers annually.

During the first two years of the war he held a contract with the Confederate government to supply steers at prices ranging from \$8 to \$10 a head. From his own herds and from other cattle owners he acquired 25,000 head and drove them northward to the railway.

In 1863 Summerlin gave up his contract, possibly because he was dissatisfied with the prices he was getting, and formed a partnership with James McKay, Sr., one of the most daring and successful blockade runners in the entire South. Summerlin supplied the cattle and McKay the schooners in which the cattle were shipped to Cuba where they were sold from \$25 to \$30 a head, three times the price the Confederates were paying. Operating out of the Charlotte Harbor area, McKay made many successful trips to Cuba and back without being caught by the Federal blockading squadrons. On his return trips he brought food and clothing which sold for fantastically high prices. Calico, for instance, brought

\$5 a yard, common shoes for men \$18 a pair, salt \$25 a parcel, flour \$125 a barrel and sugar \$40 a sack. However, McKay much preferred to take cattle in payment instead of the confederate currency—it was depreciating in value so rapidly that he had difficulty in using it to buy more commodities in Cuba.

As soon as the war ended Summerlin organized the Cuban trade on a regular commercial basis. He made Punta Rassa his base of operations and sent his agents all through the state to buy cattle. On the drives southward the herds followed the old army roads first blazed through the wilderness by General Zachary Taylor's forces in 1838-39. The Caloosahatchee was crossed either at Fort Denaud or Fort Thompson and from those points the cattle were driven down the river past Fort Myers to Punta Rassa.

In the beginning Summerlin used the cattle pens and wharf the army had built in 1864. But when the cable company acquired the property, Summerlin built a much longer and much better wharf a little farther up the point. Only the finest quality yellow pine was used in its construction and it remained in good condition for more than a quarter century.

The arrival of the cable company did not deprive the cattlemen of a "rooming house" and "restaurant." Station manager Shultz permitted everyone who came along to lay down his blanket at night in the barracks-station or pitch his tent between the rafters. It was almost impossible to sleep outdoors because of the swarms of ferocious mosquitoes. Three excellent meals a day were provided by "Innkeeper" Shultz for \$1.50. Fresh vegetables were rarely served because they were then unobtainable but there was no lack of good substantial "vittles"—venison, salt beef, pork, fish, oysters, grits, biscuits and coffee. It was the kind of food the cattlemen esteemed—and they came back for more.

For several years Summerlin and his son Samuel monopolized the Punta Rassa cattle business. They handled only cattle which they bought themselves, some from points as far north as the St. Augustine area. The drives southward required from a week to forty days, depending on where they started. The cattle were moved ten to fifteen miles a day and were kept at night in "scrub pens" provided along the way. Along the Caloosahatchee one of these pens was located at Fort Denaud, another at Twelve Mile Creek, now known as Orange River, a third close to Fort Myers, and a fourth, a very large one, a few miles inland from Punta Rassa.

The cow hunters who kept the cattle moving on the long and grueling drives were hard living, high spirited and usually hard drinking men. They were well described by C. T. Tooke, Fort Myers' oldest living citizen, who was a cow hunter once himself, many, many years ago.

"Most of the cow hunters were youngsters who liked adventure, to see new places," Tooke said. "They thrived on hard work and ate like horses. They kept on the go from dawn to dusk and when they lay down at night, right on the ground, they never moved until morning. In the

summer they covered themselves with mosquito net, in the winter they kept warm under a horse blanket.

"On the big drives a large covered oxcart went along to carry the grub. Nothing fancy, just good solid food. A barrel of flour, a couple of sacks of sweet potatoes, a big bag of grits, plenty of bacon and lard, a demi-john of syrup, slabs of salt pork, and lots of coffee. This was something the men simply had to have—coffee. And lots of it. They never drank less than three or four quarts a day.

"Usually when we started we slaughtered a young fat steer and sometimes we killed a couple more along the way. Cattle were cheap in those days and it didn't make much difference whether we ate a few of them or not. To give us a variety of meat, we almost always managed to shoot a couple of deer and also plenty of wild turkeys. Game was mighty plentiful way back then.

"When we got to Punta Rassa the young fellows usually cut up a bit. They were paid off in gold and had some mighty big poker games. And they drank much more than a little of that Cuban rum which they got for fifty cents a gallon. It had a terrible kick and when a fellow drank a quart or so of it, he became right hilarious. Sometimes the boys got into fights but most of them were good-natured and didn't quarrel even when they were drunk. Of course, some of the boys didn't drink at all but most of them did—just to break the monotony. And after they sobered up they didn't touch it again for weeks."

The Summerlins, father and son, held their monopoly on the Punta Rassa cattle business until about 1870. Then other big cattlemen began driving their herds to the point and sold their cattle direct to buyers from Key West and Havana. For using the Summerlins' pens and wharf they paid a fee of 25 to 50 cents a head, depending upon the price paid by the buyers. In 1874 the Summerlins built a "hotel" of their own to house the cattlemen. It was called the Summerlin House.

The cattle business began really to boom in 1868 when Cuban insurrectionists started a ten-year conflict with their Spanish overlords. The rebels controlled many of the areas where cattle were raised and the Spaniards paid top prices for steers to feed the soldiers they rushed into the island. At the wharf in Punta Rassa the cattlemen received a doubloon a head, worth \$15.60 in American money, in Spanish gold. That wasn't as much as in blockade running days but more than twice the price paid by Florida buyers and enough to give the cattlemen a handsome profit.

The average cattleman was more than a little nonchalant about the golden flood. He usually dropped the doubloons into his saddlebags and then, as often as not, tossed the bags carelessly behind the counter of a store to be kept for a day or two. At times they were left dangling from a hitching post where anyone could pick them up. But no one ever did. Perhaps the reason was that in those days a captured thief was given very little time to say his prayers.

Back home again the cattlemen quite often gave the gold coins to their children to play with until they were stored away in a trunk, or box, or keg. One story is told about a man who tore down his old home in 1887 to make way for a new one and found, under the living room of the old structure, 27 doubloons which had been dropped through the cracks in the floor by his baby son fifteen years before—and never missed.

The Cuban demand for cattle continued strong all during the 1870's. During that decade 165,669 head of cattle were shipped to Cuban ports and for them the cattlemen received \$2,441,846. That was truly a princely sum for those lean reconstruction years and the cattlemen prospered.

The golden flood contributed in no small degree to the development of what was to be the Caloosahatchee's fair city of palms—Fort Myers.

Let's go back up the river and see what was happening at the fort.

#### *Fort Myers Becomes a Settlement*

Havoc was wrought to once proud Fort Myers during the year immediately following the end of the Civil War.

From as far away as Manatee and Pinellas men came down the coast in sloops and schooners and all but demolished many of the buildings. Windows and doors were torn from their frames. Most of the flooring was ripped up. The siding was pried loose from a number of the larger buildings and even some of the cedar shingles were taken from the roofs. Everything easily moved was seized—and carried away.

This wasn't the work of vandals or ordinary thieves. The looting job was done mostly by pioneer settlers whose homes had been destroyed during the war by Federal soldiers or Union sympathizers. Now that peace had come again the settlers wanted to rebuild their homes but building materials during that chaotic period were almost unobtainable. Few lumber mills along the coast had got back into operation and materials could not be brought in from the North because the Confederate currency no longer had any value.

Word spread, however, that down on the Caloosahatchee, at Fort Myers, there were many fine buildings where excellent lumber could be obtained just for the taking. The fort had been abandoned and no one had been left behind to guard the property. The buildings were owned by the "damnyankees" who had caused the South so much grief—so why not go down to Fort Myers and take everything that could be taken? Why not indeed? So the settlers went to work and when they finished there was not much left at Fort Myers worth removing.

As a result, Fort Myers had lost its splendor when the first settlers arrived there on Wednesday, February 21, 1866.

There were four persons in the party: Capt. Manuel A. Gonzalez, owner of a small schooner; the captain's five year old son, Manuel S. Gonzalez; John A. Weatherford, his wife's brother, and Joseph D. Vivas, a friend of the family. All were from Key West.

During the final Indian conflict between 1850 and 1858, Captain Gonzalez had sailed his schooner back and forth between Tampa and Fort Myers to bring in mail and provisions. On his many trips he had become well acquainted with the region and had decided it was the finest spot in Florida for a home. So back he came.

When he first sighted the half-wrecked buildings he was shocked. This surely wasn't the spic-and-span fort he had known so well. But it was. However, when he landed he decided the looting might not have been a tragedy after all. Now so little remained that there wasn't much danger that someone would come in and buy the fort property from the government. Hardly anything remained to be sold. Perhaps he could settle here and no one would bother him.

Suiting his actions to his thoughts, he brought his supplies ashore and pitched a tent on the hospital grounds. Looking around for a place to make his home, he picked out the building which formerly had been occupied by the commanding officer. It had eight large rooms and a large stone fireplace and chimney. Most of the flooring was gone and some of the siding. But Gonzalez figured that by scouting around through all the fort buildings he might be able to find enough materials to do a patch-up job.

Weatherford and Vivas left the next day to go back to Key West and get more supplies, household furnishings and the other members of the Gonzalez family. Captain Gonzalez remained behind with his son, Manuel S., to make the new home ready.

Vivas returned three weeks later. He brought with him a pretty young bride, the former Christiana Stirrup, of Key West. Just sixteen years old, the new Mrs. Vivas was an orphan who had been raised by the Gonzalez family and Vivas had known her since she was a tiny girl. They were married in Key West on March 8, 1866, and left immediately in Vivas' sail boat "San Filo." They arrived in Fort Myers five days later, undoubtedly the first honeymooners Fort Myers ever had.

An excellent carpenter, Vivas rebuilt a small cabin which was standing close to the Gonzalez place and made his home there with his bride. They lived there until 1883 when he built a fine two-story home which in 1948 was still standing and as solid as the day it was built.

Mrs. Gonzalez and her children arrived on March 16 with her brother. Now Fort Myers could boast of two families.

Working together, Gonzalez and Vivas took over the old garden of the fort which had become overgrown with weeds. They planted sweet potatoes, melons, pumpkins and other garden crops which would grow in the late spring and summer. They also went down to Punta Rassa occasionally and served as interpreters for the Spanish cattle buyers. Always they found things to keep them busy.

During the following year two more families came to Fort Myers—the families of John Powell and William S. Clay. Powell, who came from South Carolina, planted seeds from oranges he had found growing at

the fort. After the seeds sprouted, he carefully tended the plants. When they became large enough, he started a grove across the river at a place which became known as Powell's Creek and later as New Prospect. The grove was the first in the entire Fort Myers area and produced fine fruit for more than thirty years thereafter.

Bill Clay, as he was always known, is remembered by old timers as the most notorious moonshiner that ever lived in southwest Florida. Born in the mountains of Tennessee, Clay had migrated by easy stages to North Florida and then, for some reason or other, to Fort Myers. Back at his mountain home distilling good liquor had been considered a meritorious accomplishment, even though Uncle Sam had certain objections to it. In Fort Myers he soon took up his old profession.

Clay first squatted on the waterfront between the present Monroe and Hendry streets but he didn't go into business there. Instead, he transferred his activities to a creek several miles west and set up a still. It was soon boiling merrily away and turning out a potent liquid strong enough to melt a shark skin. Passing cow-hunters patronized him well and so did Seminoles who wandered into the settlement. In a short time the creek where Clay held forth became known as Whiskey Creek. The Indians called it Wy-o-mee Creek which means the same thing.

A few years later, after Fort Myers had become a little too large to have an operating still so near at hand, Clay homesteaded up the river at Twelve Mile Creek. There he set up his still again, close by the cattle trail where customers could find it easily. He was soon doing a fine business. His whiskey, made from sugar cane, was pure and strong and bought by all—or nearly all—the best people in the Fort Myers area.

"One day an informer turned him over to the Federal revenue officers," said Mr. Tooke. "The sheriff reluctantly confiscated his still. Clay was taken to Key West to be tried. A number of town dignitaries went along, just to see that Clay got justice. On the way down the coast, Clay's still was mysteriously dropped overboard. The 'evidence' had disappeared and when the moonshiner came to trial, the judge had to dismiss the case. When Clay got back to Fort Myers he found waiting for him at the dock a brand new still. And a delegation of town folks went back to Orange River with him and helped put the contraption into operation."

Clay was arrested again sometime later and ordered to appear at Pine Level for trial. He loaded up his oxcart with barrels of shine and when he reached Pine Level, tapped the barrels on the court house lawn. Soon a merry party was in progress. Even the jury members and court officials joined in the fun. There was no session of court that day and somehow or other the indictment papers were lost.

Another time Clay told the judge tearfully that his eyesight had become too bad for him to distill liquor any longer. The sympathetic judge acquitted him. Then, to make his plea realistic, Clay asked the

judge to detail an attendant to guide him home. This was done. The attendant returned to Pine Level a week later still suffering from the effects of his journey to Clay's "inactive" still. (NOTE: The Bill Clay referred to above was not related to B. S. Clay, a prominent and respected resident of Alva.)

### *The Caloosahatchee Region Is Surveyed*

Many communities in frontier states owed their initial growth and development in post Civil War days to government surveys which opened the country to homesteaders.

But the budding community of Fort Myers was almost wrecked by surveyors.

The government survey of the Caloosahatchee area had been undertaken in the winter of 1859-60 but work had barely started when the rumblings of war were heard and the surveyors packed up their instruments and departed. They did not re-appear until February, 1872.

The head surveyors of the crew were Samuel Hamblan and W. L. Aphorp. They made their headquarters for a few weeks at the home of Captain Gonzalez and told him that when their survey was completed, and filed, settlers could make application for 160 acres under the provisions of the Homestead Act of 1862. They would get the land for nothing, just by occupying it and developing it for five years.

Gonzalez had started a store in a small building he erected behind his home but business wasn't brisk. His stock consisted of beads, gunpowder, calico, groceries and tobacco which he traded to the Indians for dressed deer skins and alligator hides. Profits were small and when Gonzalez learned that he could soon homestead 160 acres, and get title to it, he decided he had better pick out a good tract and settle on it to establish his claim.

No sooner said than done. In March 1872, Gonzalez moved his family west of the fort property to one of the finest pieces of land along the entire river. A creek, later called Manuel's Branch, ran through the land. There, near the edge of the creek, he built his home. One hundred and sixty acres of this fine land was certainly better than the small parcel he occupied in the old fort grounds. So Manuel Gonzalez thought and who can say that he was wrong.

At almost the same time the Powell family, which had been living in one of the old fort buildings, moved across the river to homestead the land where Powell had already planted his orange grove. And Bill Clay moved up the river to homestead on Twelve Mile Creek.

Because of the survey, Fort Myers lost three of its four original settlers. Only Joseph Vivas and his family remained.

Fort Myers was almost deserted. But it did not remain deserted long.

*The Hendry Clan Moves In*

Six-year-old Esther Ann was ill. Critically ill. She burned with fever and moaned piteously in delirium. She was sinking fast.

Her mother, Mrs. Charles W. Hendry, was desperate. She had no one to assist her except a very young girl who helped with the housework and who had become panic stricken in the emergency. The nearest white neighbors lived more than thirty miles away, at Fort Myers. Her husband had gone out on the range three days before and had not returned.

Mrs. Hendry went to the doorway. In the distance she saw an Indian with his squaw and two children. Frantically she waved for them to approach. The Indian came running. He looked at the child and muttered: "Pickaninny sick. Bad sick. Soon go big sleep."

Mrs. Hendry finally made him understand that her husband was somewhere out on the prairie and that she wanted him home. The Seminole left. Late that afternoon Hendry rode in, as fast as his pony could travel. The Indian had found him and told him about the sick child.

Esther Ann died that night, May 17, 1873. A rude coffin was made and she was buried beneath a pine tree near the home. Three other Hendry men were present when the body was lowered into the grave: Capt. Francis Asbury Hendry, Abner Hendry and W. Marion Hendry.

Immediately after the services Mrs. Hendry began packing her possessions. She emphatically announced that she had no intention of spending another night in the wilderness. She was moving nearer neighbors so that she could have help if one of her other children, James, Alice or Roean, became sick.

Charles W. did not argue. He knew that when his Jane L. made up her mind to do a thing she was going to do it. Besides, he had always had his doubts about the wisdom of moving his family far out in the Glades country, close to the Big Cypress, just to be near the Hendry grazing grounds. Now he knew he had done the wrong thing. So he began helping his wife pack. The other Hendry men lent a hand. The loading-up job did not take long—pioneer homes were not lavishly furnished. Two oxcarts held everything.

Four days later Mr. and Mrs. Hendry and their children arrived at Fort Myers. Intending to homestead, they did not move into the fort property but took possession of a small, thatched-roof, log cabin which stood at the edge of Billy's Creek. It had been erected during the Seminole War as a shelter for sentries. It had only two rooms but served very well as a temporary home.

During the following summer, other Hendrys came to Fort Myers. Always a clannish group, they liked to live near kinfolk. Capt. F. A. Hendry came first with his family and rebuilt one of the officers' quarters standing just east of the Vivas home. W. Marion Hendry and his family were next. They rebuilt an old building on the river bank east of the

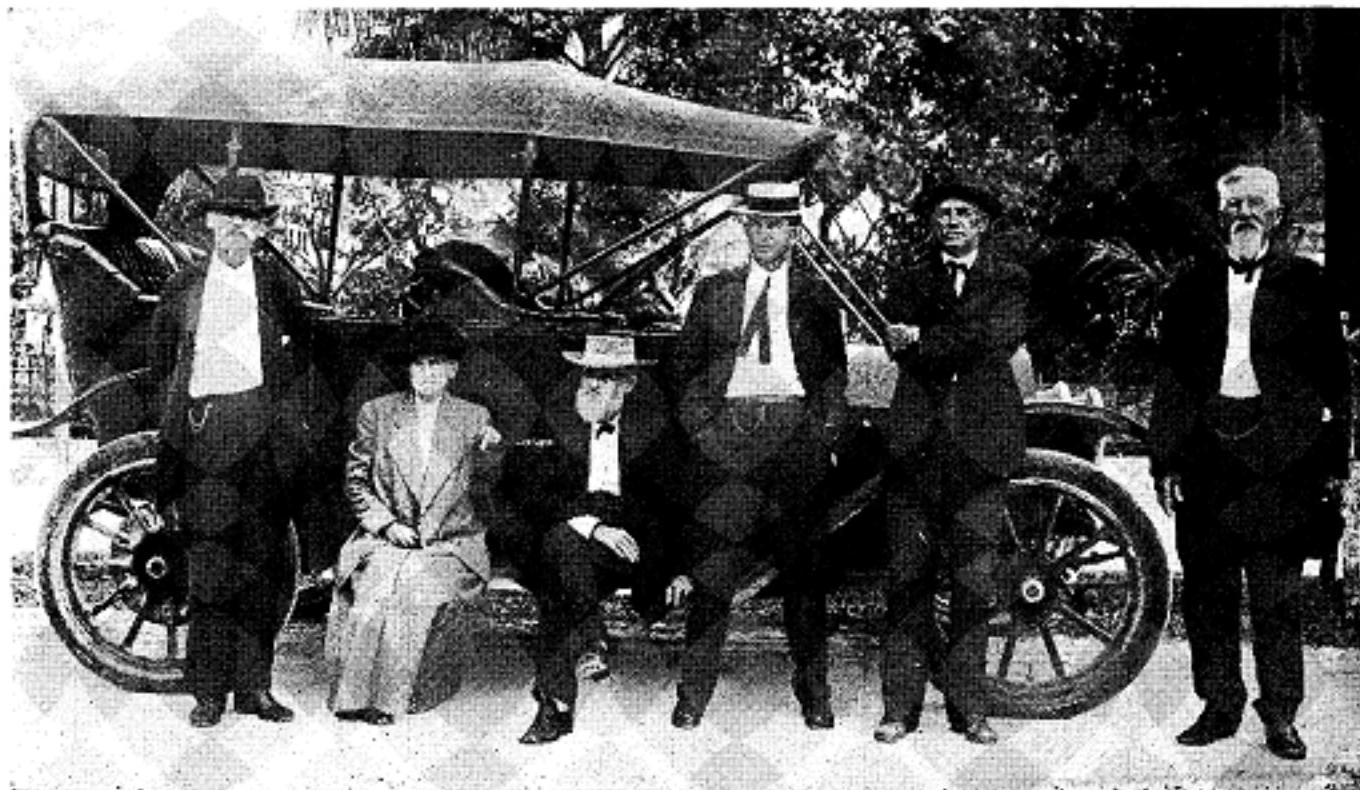
present Hendry Street. F. A. and Marion Hendry were first cousins of Charles W. Hendry.

Three more families, all closely related to the Hendrys, soon followed. They were the families of Jehu J. Blount, whose wife, Mary Jane, was a sister of F. A. and Marion Hendry, and Francis J. and Augustus J. Wilson, nephews of the Hendrys. Blount occupied another log cabin on Billy's Creek, not far from the home of Charles Hendry, and the Wilsons settled on the riverfront west of the creek. Augustus Wilson remained only a short time, moving in early fall to Manatee County.

None of the Hendrys, or Wilsons, or Blounts were strangers to Fort Myers. They were all cattlemen and had often passed the fort on cattle drives to Punta Rassa. The Hendrys had known the fort property for many years. F. A. Hendry had stopped there several times during the Seminole War; Charles had brought Seminole prisoners there while a member of a Florida Volunteer boat company and Marion while an officer in the Cattle Guard Battalion which tried to capture the fort in 1864.

All these newcomers were able, intelligent men and all were destined to take prominent parts in the development of the Fort Myers area. Capt. F. A. Hendry became known as "The Father of Fort Myers," partly because of his many descendants but mainly because he fostered and took an active part in almost every worthy movement in the early days of the community.

Capt. Hendry was a descendant of William Hendry, of Scotch-English lineage, who came to America before the Revolutionary War and settled in North Carolina. Early in the 19th Century the family



*Photo Courtesy of R. V. Lee*

Here are some real pioneers of Fort Myers. Left to right they are: W. M. Hendry, Mrs. Jehu J. Blount, Wash Hendry, James A. Hendry, Jr., James A. Hendry, Sr., and Capt. F. A. Hendry. The picture was taken in 1912.

started moving southward, living for a few years in South Carolina and then settling on plantations around Blackshear, Ga., in Thomas County. There Francis Asbury was born on November 19, 1833, the son of Mr. and Mrs. James Edward Hendry. In 1851 he came with his parents to Florida and settled in what is now Polk County.

During the Seminole conflict of 1850-58, he came to Fort Myers twice, first as a dispatch bearer in 1854 and a year later as a guide for a cavalry company in which he later enlisted and became a lieutenant. During the last year of the Civil War he served as captain of a company in the Cattle Guard Battalion commanded by Col. Charles J. Munnerlyn.

Captain Hendry began raising cattle when he first came to Florida and by the time the Civil War ended he was the owner of thousands of head. When hostilities ceased he moved his headquarters to Fort Meade, near Bartow. Several years later he began moving his cattle southward, seeking better range. In 1870 he took several of his larger herds across the Caloosahatchee, in the Fort Thompson area. For many years thereafter even while making his home at Fort Myers, his herds dominated vast grazing lands of the open range. He was truly the Cattle King of the Land Below the Caloosahatchee and was reported to be the owner of more than 50,000 head.

The parents of Mrs. Hendry, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Lanier, came to Fort Myers late in the summer to be near their daughter. Lanier bought the stock in a small store which Gonzalez had opened two years before and started in business. Mrs. Ida English, of Alva, a daughter of the Blounts remembers him well.

"He was a big, gruff man and all of us children were afraid of him," Mrs. English said. "One day my mother sent me over to his store to buy some flour. There was a fence around his place with a gate at the walk. When I entered I forgot to close the gate behind me. Mr. Lanier was standing in the door of his store and when he saw the open gate he yelled: 'Shut that damn gate and shut it damned quick!' That was the first time I had ever heard such terrible profanity and I was shocked to death. I ran home crying and sobbed in my mother's arms for hours. Weeks passed before she could persuade me to go to the store again."

Mrs. English said that Lanier stocked almost everything the Indians wanted and within a short time built up a fine trade with them, taking alligator hides, deer skins and bird plumes in exchange for goods. He also did a good business with the new settlers and with cowboys who passed on the way to and from Punta Rassa. Mrs. Lanier had a boarding house—the first in Fort Myers. However, Mr. and Mrs. Lanier left after several years to live near their other children in the Fort Meade district. Before they departed Lanier sold his stock to Jehu J. Blount who had opened a larger store a little farther down the river.

The settlers were badly alarmed by the great hurricane of Monday, October 6, 1873. Heavy rains began the day before and continued all through the night. Early Monday morning the wind reached gale velocity from the southwest and increased in intensity all day long. By

mid-afternoon the gale had become a hurricane. Trees crashed to the ground. The shells of many of the old fort buildings toppled over. Early in the evening all the settlers fled to the old fort stables for safety. They remained there throughout the night. The great pine timbers creaked and groaned but the structure held firm. By morning all danger had passed.

Down at Whiskey Creek, however, there was a fatality. Bill Clay's father-in-law, who helped him operate his still, was on his way home when the storm was at its worst. He tried to cross the creek in a skiff; the wind capsized the boat, and he drowned.

At the home of Charles Hendry, the hurricane brought a different kind of casualty. A heavy tree crashed through the kitchen roof and Mrs. Hendry's most cherished possession, a No. 8 Charter Oak cook stove, was smashed to pieces. She never ceased regretting the loss, even after the stove was later replaced by a newer model. Rather than rebuild the house, the Hendrys moved to the waterfront where they bought Bill Clay's squatter rights to land just east of the present Monroe street. For his rights Clay received \$300 and a bay mare named Dolly.

Before 1873 drew to a close the settlers of Fort Myers faced a tragedy, or what appeared to be a tragedy, far worse than any which could be wrought by a hurricane. A man arrived who said he owned all the land they occupied—that his homestead application for the land had been granted by government officials at Gainesville on December 7.

The newcomer was Major James Evans, of Suffolk, Virginia.

#### *Major Evans Finds a Town*

When Major Evans first came to Fort Myers late in December, 1873, he was only fifty years old. But his hair was white and so was his little goatee which he pulled and scratched when excited. Because of his snowy hair, he was always referred to, behind his back, as Old Man Evans. But when people addressed him they called him Major Evans.

Although none of the settlers had ever seen the Major before, he was not a stranger to Fort Myers. He knew the surrounding territory better probably than any other person in South Florida except the Hendrys and the Indians. He had tramped over the country many times.

Born in Suffolk, Va., on February 12, 1823, Evans in early life learned to be a surveyor. Because of ill health, he came to Florida in 1842 and joined a government crew then surveying the western part of Hillsborough County. When summer came he returned to Virginia.

Many times thereafter he joined Florida surveying crews to work during the winter months. Late in November, 1859, he was assigned to a crew headed by John Jackson which had been ordered to survey the Caloosahatchee region. The crew arrived at Fort Myers early in December, and began work on December 12.

The survey was halted during the winter because the rumblings of approaching war were heard. But Evans did not leave with Jackson and others of the crew. Having taken a liking to the Caloosahatchee area,

with its balmy winter climate and fertile land, he decided it would be an ideal spot to pursue a hobby he had always wanted to take up—the growing of tropical fruits in a semi-tropical country.

Evans did not believe that war would last long, if it came at all, and hoped the survey he had helped to start would be soon completed. The land then could be purchased from the government. Persons who settled would have first chance to buy.

Evans, therefore, decided to remain at Fort Myers and establish his claim. During the following year he planted hundreds of coconuts and set out an acre of tropical plants and shrubs obtained from Key West. He even began raising coffee plants. Then, much against his will, he had to leave. Fort Sumter had been fired upon and war was inevitable.

Records of Nonsemond County, Virginia, show he served in the Confederate Army and attained the rank of major. Nothing is known about his life immediately after the war—when talking later to Fort Myers friends he never mentioned that period.

It is quite apparent, however, that Evans watched and waited for the first opportunity to file a homestead claim for the land he wanted on the Caloosahatchee. The surveyor general completed the map of the river region on September 30, 1873, and in less than two months Evans got his application approved.

Evans undoubtedly had a good claim to the land. He could prove that he settled there first, had cultivated the soil, and had left only because of the war. The fact that others came after he did, and settled there, did not make his claim any less strong. He had fulfilled all the requirements of the law.

However, the major never went to court to get the squatters on the fort site dispossessed. Why he did not isn't clear. Manuel S. Gonzalez, in telling about this phase of Fort Myers' history, said: "Major Evans was a kindly disposed man and being willing to do unto others as he would have them do unto him a compromise was reached which was satisfactory to all. The town plat was drawn to conform to the settlers' claims for land. That explains why the streets were laid out the way they are, sort of haphazardly."

And Captain Hendry wrote: "The coming of Major Evans was to the squatters the realization of that which they mostly feared. Being a stranger in their midst, the confiscating of their property was to their minds the thing mostly to be expected. But the major soon ingratiated himself with them by the kindly assurance that they would be taken care of. The heartfelt gratitude of these people caused them to hold in highest esteem the man who allowed them to retain their homes."

It's possible, however, that the issue may not have been settled as harmoniously as Gonzalez and Hendry indicated. Evans may have had other reasons for "taking care" of the squatters. One old timer says he asked the major once why he hadn't tried to oust them and that he replied: "Oh, I didn't want to take too many chances. I had the law on my side—but they had Winchesters!"

Courthouse records show that the major got title to the land, 139.45 acres, on October 12, 1876. Immediately thereafter he employed Julian G. Arista, deputy surveyor of Monroe County, in which Fort Myers was then located, to lay out a town site. The plat was recorded in Key West in December, 1876.

During the following year and a half, the major deeded a large part of the best land away, for little or nothing. Members of the Hendry clan got most of the waterfront. Captain Hendry obtained the choicest property. For \$1 he got the land between Jackson and Lee, where the post office now stands and for another \$1 all the water frontage between Royal Palm Avenue and Hough Street, approximately 800 feet. These same transactions also gave him large tracts south of First Street, totalling about twelve acres.

For \$1, Mrs. Jane L. Hendry, wife of Charles W., received most of the waterfront between Monroe and Hendry and all of the block bounded by First, Hendry, Second and Monroe.

For \$1, W. Marion Hendry got most of the waterfront between Hendry and Jackson and some choice tracts south of First. For another \$1, Jehu J. Blount, whose wife was a Hendry, was deeded all the waterfront between Hough and Washington and some other tracts besides.

Joseph Vivas, who had lived on the fort site much longer than any of the others, paid a higher price. For a narrow strip just east of Lee Street he had to pay \$400.

Of the entire waterfront between Monroe Street and Billy's Creek, Evans retained less than 500 feet, in four separate strips. All the rest of it with the exception of the small piece bought by Vivas, went to members of the Hendry family for a recorded grand total of \$5.

In disposing of the land so generously, Evans may not have been coerced by "Winchester influence." And perhaps he wasn't as "benevolent" as Hendry said he was. There may be another explanation for his liberality.

On June 4, 1872, Congress passed an act for the special benefit of the International Ocean Telegraph Co., giving it the right to pre-empt forty acres at Punta Rassa, Fort Myers, Branch River, Bartow and Tuckertown where it had established, or intended to establish, stations. When officials of the company went to the land office to claim forty acres for a station at Fort Myers they found that the land already had been claimed by Evans. They filed suit against him and the case was not disposed of until two years later when the Secretary of the Interior made a special ruling in Evans' favor.

It is possible that members of the Hendry family advanced money to Evans to help him pay the expense of contesting the company's court action against him and in obtaining the ruling from the Secretary of the Interior. Perhaps the Hendrys paid all the expenses and, consequently, received the lion's share of the new town site. But that is only hearsay. There is nothing in available records to substantiate it.

All that is known for sure is that the cable company established a Fort Myers station but got no land as a reward. To operate the station, the company sent in Telegrapher C. W. (Waddy) Thompson. Soon after his arrival he fell in love with Laura Hendry, daughter of Captain F. A., and they were married. Their wedding probably was the first in Fort Myers.

Perhaps because of the company's law suit, Evans did not wait five years to get title to his land under provisions of the Homestead Act of 1862. Instead, he bought it outright under provisions of the Land Act of 1820, paying the prevailing price of \$1.25 an acre. The entire original town site, consisting of 139.45 acres, cost him exactly \$174.32. He was granted a receipt on October 12, 1876.

The town of Fort Myers was now bought and paid for. But it existed only on a map. It still was merely a community of a few scattered homes. But growth was to come—in time.

#### *Development Comes—but Slowly*

The Land of the Caloosahatchee was not developed with magic rapidity during the 1870's. Hardy pioneers did not flock to the river region from every state in the Union and make the wilderness blossom like a rose. There is no reason why such a phenomenon should have occurred.

True enough, the climate of the Land of the Caloosahatchee was not surpassed by any spot in Florida. And few other places had soil as fertile and as limitless in expanse.

Nevertheless, there were obstacles to rapid development. The greatest was a complete lack of adequate transportation facilities. Fort Myers was truly a place at the end of nowhere. It was a frontier town in every sense of the term.

The nearest railroad was at Cedar Keys, two hundred miles or so up the coast, where a decrepit railroad began its meandering way northeastward to Fernandina. The nearest town of any consequence was Key West, far down on the keys, and even Key West wasn't large. Tampa was still just a small nondescript village.

All this meant that there was an almost complete lack of markets for farm products grown in the Caloosahatchee region. Bountiful crops could be grown, and they were, but buyers of those crops were few and far between. Key West offered the best market—and that was none too good. Farmers along both coasts shipped their products there and the markets often became glutted. The result was that the bottom fell out of prices and the farmers did not get enough for their products to pay the transportation charges.

Despite all this, Fort Myers did not stagnate. The infant village had one great asset—it was the one and only accessible trading center for a rapidly growing cattle region. And it was as a cow town that Fort Myers grew, slowly but surely.

The importance of the cattle industry can best be shown by the fact that during one year in the 1870's Captain Hendry shipped 12,896 head from Punta Rassa to Key West. The prices paid averaged \$15. For all the cattle he received approximately \$200,000.

Captain Hendry did not keep all this money himself, of course. Much of it went to others with whom he dealt. But many of those cattle-men came to Fort Myers to buy their supplies and so did the cow hunters who worked for them. This meant good business for Fort Myers' merchants, and they began to prosper. It also meant good business for blacksmiths, and cobblers, and druggists, and doctors, and everyone else who took care of the cattlemen's needs.

This explains the fact that men in every line of endeavor began coming to Fort Myers. They could make a living here while at the same time get all the benefits of a fine climate, and fish and hunt to their heart's content.

Homesteaders came too, of course, just as they did to every other part of Florida. The lure of free land offered by the Homestead Act of 1862 was irresistible. From North Florida, Georgia and Alabama they came, and from many northern states. And even from foreign countries. They did not come in a great migration but a few this year, and a few next, the total always climbing.

They came in huge covered wagons, drawn by mules or oxen, traveling a few miles a day over the sandy trails. They came in sloops and schooners, stopping at white beached islands along the way. When they found a spot they liked, they pitched their tents. If it proved to be what they wanted they built a lean-to shack, with a palmetto roof, and settled down. Many filed homestead claims; others didn't bother. They would take care of that matter when they had more time. The most important thing was to clear the land and plant their crops.

Not all those who came sought homes. Some sought refuge from the law. Nervous and apprehensive, they were always ready to flee again at a moment's notice. On some of the islands down the coast it was never considered good manners to ask a man where he was from. To do so might embarrass him—and lead to shooting.

Some of the newcomers came for adventure and nothing else. They were the restless ones who can always be found living in the out-of-way places of the world. Bored by civilization, they seek the frontier lands and live in peace and contentment.

Such a man was William Allen, a refined and well-educated man of good family from Boston, Mass. He settled on Sanibel Island in 1866 to raise castor oil beans which he expected to sell to the government. Two years later he built a causeway through the marsh which separated Punta Rassa from the mainland. Jacob Summerlin paid him for the work.

The hurricane of October 6, 1873, covered Sanibel Island with five feet of water and destroyed his crops and equipment. For some unknown reason he then headed inland from Fort Myers and settled near the edge of the Big Cypress, perhaps taking the shack the Charles Hendrys had

abandoned the previous spring. He lived there a number of years and the locality became known as Allen's Place. Later it adopted the name "Immokalee," meaning "My Home." And that's the name it goes by today.

Another adventuresome man was Captain William B. Collier who settled with his family at the north end of Marco Island in 1871 to make it his headquarters for trading up and down the coast. The story is told about a terrible storm that affected Captain Bill for life. One day he was out in his sloop with his father. A preacher passenger was on board. The wind began blowing a gale and Bill gave the preacher an axe, telling him to cut the main sheet when he yelled. Instead the preacher dropped the axe and fell to his knees in prayer. The sloop capsized and Bill's father was drowned. The prayers might have been helpful in saving the preacher and Bill—but Bill never thought so. The story is that he became an atheist and remained one until he died.

Captain Collier established an Indian trading post on the island and built up a large and profitable trade with Seminoles who came in dugout canoes from deep in the Big Cypress and from islands along the coast. At first the captain lived with his family in a small palmetto-thatched log cabin but later built a large, attractive home on top of a high Indian mound. It was well furnished and boasted of one of the first upright pianos on the southwest coast.

The captain was the first coastwise trader who made Fort Myers a port of call. He sailed up the Calooshatchee in his schooner "Guide" the first time in the fall of 1871. Thereafter he stopped there regularly once a month, bringing in supplies from New Orleans and Key West. Each time he came he invited everyone in the settlement for a cruise on the river and his visits always were looked forward to, particularly by the children.

In 1874 Captain Collier brought in one of Fort Myers' first storekeepers, Major Aaron Frierson, who had served in the War Between the States. The major was a native of South Carolina but had gone to Tampa after the war to escape carpet bag rule and Negro supremacy. In Tampa he learned of the thriving cow town on the Caloosahatchee and came down on the "Guide" to look it over. He found Fort Myers smaller than he expected but decided it had good prospects, so he remained and went into business with Marion Hendry. They established a store on the northeast corner of First and Hendry under the firm name of Frierson & Hendry.

Major Frierson made arrangements with Major Evans to buy the southeast corner of First and Jackson for a homesite and built a house with concrete walls "so the termites wouldn't eat it up," he said. Portions of the walls are said to be still standing inside the business building now on the same site. Two of the major's daughters were married to sons of Captain Hendry. Julia was married to James E. Hendry, Jr., in 1875 and three years later her sister Ella was married to Louis A. Hendry.

Taylor Frierson, the major's son, became the proprietor of the Frierson House and accommodated everyone who came along with a room and three excellent meals a day for \$5 a week. In 1887 he gave up the boarding house and went into the cattle business. He also owned a large grove near Buckingham.

Captain Collier brought to Fort Myers the materials for the first school house paid for by the county. The building was two stories high, with one room upstairs and one down, and was located on the southwest corner of Second and Jackson on an acre of ground donated to the board of public instruction of Monroe County by Major Evans on October 2, 1878. Captain Peter Nelson, who then represented Fort Myers on the school board, rushed the building to completion and classes were started on November 15, the same year.

While this school was the first owned by the county it was not the first in the village. And before there was any school at all, classes were held for the children of the community. The teacher was Mrs. Evalina Weatherford Gonzalez, wife of Captain Gonzalez. The mother of a large family, Mrs. Gonzalez was determined that the education of her children should not be neglected even though they were living at the end of nowhere. Her husband brought in textbooks from Key West and Mrs. Gonzalez started holding classes in her home in the fall of 1868. Her first pupils were two of her children, Manuel S. and Mary, and two neighbors' children, Janet Clay and Josephine Powell.

Fort Myers children were taught by a paid teacher for the first time in the winter of 1873-74. The school house was a small log cabin close to the river bank, northeast of the present post office, owned by Major Evans. The teacher was Robert Bell, a tall, gangly, and very dignified Englishman who had come to Florida for his health and had wandered down to the Caloosahatchee to learn what a frontier settlement was like. Captain Hendry, who then had three children of school age, persuaded him to remain and take charge of the school for \$25 a month and room and board, plus all the fishing and hunting he wanted. As an extra inducement, Captain Hendry promised Bell he would teach him how to ride horseback and would even let him use his best sorrel pony all winter long.

Ten children attended the first classes held in the little log cabin school. They were Virginia Lee, George and Frank Hendry, children of Captain Hendry; Ida and Mattie Blount, Amelia Vivas, James A. Hendry, son of Charles Hendry, and Lavenia, Mary and Manuel Gonzalez.

The Englishman was well liked by the children. He didn't bother them much with difficult arithmetic problems—he knew so little about that intricate subject that he couldn't even correct their mistakes. But what he lacked in knowledge of arithmetic he more than made up for by his knowledge of literature. He knew almost all of Shakespeare by heart and when he read Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities" the youngsters thrilled with excitement. He also had an excellent knowledge of

geography, having wandered over much of the world, and the stories he told about strange lands were as interesting as fiction.

The log cabin served as Fort Myers' only school house, even though the number of pupils increased rapidly, until the county-owned school was opened in 1878. Children who attended classes in the new school had an experience they always remembered—one of their classmates was a bright young Seminole lad named Billy Conapachee whom Captain Hendry had taken into his home to raise and educate. The Indian boy learned rapidly and his grades were always as good as any of the white children's. After he returned to his tribe he married and named all his children after the captain and members of the captain's family. One of his sons is said to be Jose Billy who was trained in theology and now preaches at the Seminoles' Baptist Church in the Big Cypress.

The first church services held in Fort Myers were conducted in the same log cabin which served as a school. The first preacher was a Methodist circuit rider, Rev. W. C. Jordan, who came on horseback in January, 1872, from Bartow, a hundred miles away. At that time there were only four families in Fort Myers and two of them were of the Catholic faith. But that made no difference to the circuit rider—he held services just the same. Every man, woman and child in the tiny settlement attended, and prayed with him.

In the winter of 1880-81, when Fort Myers was becoming quite a metropolis, the Methodists built the first real church anywhere in the Caloosahatchee region. It was located on the south side of First Street just west of Royal Palm Avenue. Because of the tearful pleas of Rev. E. H. Giles, pastor at the time, cattlemen for miles around chipped in and helped pay for the new edifice.

The new church was mentioned by Dr. James A. Henshall, of Louisville, Ky., in his book "Camping and Cruising in Florida," written after he had cruised up the Caloosahatchee in 1882.

"We arrived at Fort Myers on Sunday and at night all hands and the cook turned out and attended divine services," Dr. Henshall wrote. "I was surprised to find so much conventional style in a place seemingly so distant and so isolated from all the world. I could not realize I was in the wilds of Florida while gazing upward at the lofty Gothic ceiling, with its chamfered and oiled rafters, or at the new cabinet organ, or at Jack flirting with a pretty girl in a killing Gainsborough hat and bangs . . . Some of the wealthiest cattlemen in southern Florida reside in Fort Myers and their wholesome influence is everywhere apparent."

Because of the cattlemen referred to by Dr. Henshall, Fort Myers continued to grow steadily during the 1870's. But on August 22, 1876, it ceased to be Fort Myers—so far as the U.S. government was concerned. By official order of the Post Office Department the village became Myers—just plain Myers. There was already one Fort Myer in the country, Washington declared, and one was enough, even though it was spelled differently and was a thousand miles or so away from Fort Myers, Florida—far up in Virginia.

The people of Fort Myers objected strenuously to the name shortening. But Washington was firm. The change must be made, the officials declared, or else the village on the Caloosahatchee would have to get along without a post office and government-paid-for mail service besides. So Fort Myers became Myers, so far as mail matters were concerned, and Myers it remained until November 9, 1901, when the post office department finally relented and officially changed the name back to Fort Myers.

Despite Washington's order, the name Myers never was used by the people of Fort Myers for anything except mail purposes. The old fort which had caused the village to come into existence could not be so brutally ignored. People continued to say they lived in Fort Myers and when the town was incorporated a few years later the name Fort Myers was officially adopted. So the fact that Fort Myers was once Myers can be conveniently forgotten.

The honor of becoming the first postmaster of Fort Myers went to W. M. Hendry, known to everyone as Uncle Marion. And the first post office was located in his general store on the northeast corner of First and Hendry.

Hendry's appointment aroused the ire of Jehu Blount, as might have been expected. Blount owned a general store on the northwest corner of First and Hendry and the two men were keen competitors. What was more, Blount had been serving for a year or so as the unofficial postmaster of the village, without a cent of pay, and it galled him sorely to see people trotting into his rival's store to get their mail—and do their buying. That would never, never do. So Blount began pulling political strings and when Hendry's term expired succeeded in having appointed as postmaster his own business partner, Howell A. Parker.

For many years Parker was one of Fort Myers' leading citizens. A native of North Carolina, he served in the Confederate Army and was wounded. He lost all his property during the war and when the conflict ended came to Florida and secured a job teaching school at Leesburg. In 1878 he learned that a new county-owned school was to be opened that fall in Fort Myers and he applied for the position of principal. His qualifications were excellent and he secured the appointment.

During the winter he became friendly with Blount and in the spring the two men formed a partnership. Parker had saved some money at Leesburg and he used it to buy the corner where Blount had his store, paying \$300 for the land. He also invested money in Blount's business, greatly increasing the stock of goods carried. On August 22, 1879, he was named postmaster. Now people had to come to the Parker-Blount store to get their mail. The business thrived.

That fall a new school teacher came to Fort Myers to take the job Parker had left. She was Mary G. Verdier, of Beaufort, S. C., neat and intelligent and, what interested Parker far more, unusually pretty. Before the winter passed he robbed the county of its teacher. Their wedding was a grand event. Cattlemen, hunters, merchants and boatmen

put on their best Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes and the women their starched muslins and crinolines. The bride, dressed in snowy white, was attended by her older girl pupils who served as bridesmaids. The marriage ceremony was performed by Rev. C. E. Pelot in the Methodist Church. After the wedding the young couple went way up to Tampa on their honeymoon.

Parker was not only Fort Myers' second postmaster—he also later won the honor of becoming the town's first mayor.

#### *The Cuban Cattle Market Crashes*

Efforts of Cuban insurrectionists to break the Spanish grip on their island were crushed in 1878. People in Spain rejoiced over the news that the conflict had ended. But peace in Cuba soon ended a period of unprecedented prosperity for the cattlemen of Florida.

The Spaniards in Cuba no longer had to import thousands of head of cattle each year to feed their soldiers. Production of cattle on the island increased rapidly. By the end of 1880 prices paid for Florida cattle had sagged from \$15 a head to less than \$10. Then, soon afterward, Spanish officials in Cuba imposed an import duty of \$1 a head. Prices slumped still more. Shipments to Cuba dropped to almost nothing. Only the Key West business remained.

The flow of Spanish doubloons to the Land of the Caloosahatchee subsided from a flood to a trickle. Cattlemen mourned and the business of Fort Myers' merchants showed a sharp decline. The future looked anything but bright.

But then, when least expected, came good news.



## CHAPTER IV

### FORT MYERS HAS ITS UPS AND DOWNS

A GOG WITH EXCITEMENT, Telegrapher Waddy Thompson hurried out of his Western Union office and rushed over to Parker-Blount's store as fast as his stout legs would carry him. He had just heard big news from upstate telegraphers who were gossiping on the line and he could hardly wait to tell others what had happened.

A half dozen men were loafing on benches in the shade in front of the store when Waddy appeared. Eagerly they listened to what he had to say.

Governor Bloxham had just announced in Tallahassee, Thompson breathlessly related, that he had completed a deal for selling four million acres of Florida land. Hamilton Disston, that big saw manufacturer up in Philadelphia, was the buyer. He was going to pay the state a million dollars. One million dollars in good cold cash! Imagine that!

But that wasn't half the story. Disston was going to drain the Everglades. What was more, he was going to use Fort Myers as his base of operations. He was going to bring in great dredges which would work up the Caloosahatchee, widening and deepening the channel. Then they would blast their way through the rocky ledge beyond Fort Thompson and proceed to dredge out a big canal all the way to Lake Okeechobee.

In no time at all, Thompson declared, all the water would be drained from the swampy Glades and millions of acres of that rich, black muck-land would be made available for cultivation. Pioneers would flock in from everywhere and settle in the Glades and all along the Caloosahatchee. Fort Myers would become the gateway to a vast new empire. It would become the biggest city in the state.

Great news indeed! It spread like wildfire all over Fort Myers. Waddy Thompson was called upon to repeat the story again and again. Every hour or so he hurried back to the telegraph office to get fresh gossip from his wife who was relieving him at the keys. It was a hard day for Mrs. Thompson but the most exciting day in her husband's life.

The people of Fort Myers were thrilled by the glorious vista which opened up before them as they pondered over the marvelous development the huge drainage project would surely bring. They were not greatly interested in the reasons why the Disston land deal was made. But they could not help but learn some of the details.

Back in the days before the Civil War, they were told, slave owners dreamed rosy dreams of draining the Glades and converting the rich lands into huge sugar and rice plantations. The slave owners and their

allies finally succeeded in persuading Congress to give swamp and overflowed lands in Florida to the state so money could be obtained to carry on drainage projects.

Scheming politicians prevented the lands from being used as intended. Instead of the lands being sold or pledged to make drainage projects possible they were pledged to meet the interest payments on bonds issued by private corporations, in which the politicians were financially interested, to build railroads in the northern part of the state. One was the rickety railroad which staggered southwestward from Fernandina to Cedar Keys. The other were nondescript affairs on which great sums were squandered. None ever met operating expenses.

By 1870 the state was head over heels in debt. Interest on the railroad bonds had not been paid for years. Altogether the state owed \$3,527,000 which it was obligated to pay. To meet this debt, the state sold the railroads which it had taken over and succeeded in retiring bonds to the amount of \$2,872,700. That left a debt of \$644,300 still unpaid. To get money to pay off some of the creditors with the most political influence, the state began selling huge tracts of the public domain to land speculators. Other creditors stepped in and obtained an injunction restraining the state from making sales. United States courts then took charge. By 1880 the state's finances were in a hopeless muddle. Interest charges kept piling up.

The courts finally decided that a million dollars would be sufficient to extricate the state from the financial quagmire.

At this juncture the wealthy Philadelphian, Hamilton Disston, appeared in the picture. He agreed to give the state the million dollars and take in return four million acres of public land at twenty-five cents an acre. An agreement to that effect was signed May 30, 1881.

The agreement provided for more than the sale of four million acres. It also stipulated that Disston should drain the Everglades and that as a reward for his efforts he was to receive half of the area reclaimed.

In return for the million dollars the state gave to Disston and his associates title to huge tracts of land extending all the way from Duval and St. Johns counties in Florida's northern sector to Lake Okeechobee. These tracts were supposed to be all swamp and overflowed lands, so covered with water at the time of planting or harvesting that they could not be farmed without artificial drainage. But Disston was not stuck with such almost worthless lands. He was too good a business man. He was in the driver's seat and could get almost anything he wanted. And he got it—huge areas of some of the finest lands in Florida.

Disston undoubtedly had a special reason for being willing to go to the expense of draining the Everglades. That reason involved sugar. At that time sugar was selling for 10 cents a pound and more. Translated into terms of present-day money that meant at least 30 cents a pound. Sugar was indeed a sweet luxury, made so by the fact that most of the sugar plantations of the South which had been worked by slaves before

the war were laying untilled. And production of sugar in Cuba had been disrupted by the Cuban insurrection of 1868 to 1878. The shortage of sugar was acute and it therefore demanded a premium price.

Unquestionably Disston knew all this. He also doubtless knew that the rich Glades muckland would be ideal for sugar raising after being drained. And by using machinery instead of slave labor, huge profits could be made by a man with sufficient capital and sufficient vision. Having both, Disston felt qualified to undertake the sugar-producing venture and reap the profits for himself.

Almost immediately after the agreement with Governor Bloxham was signed Disston completed plans for starting work on the Glades drainage project. He organized a company with the imposing name of Atlantic and Gulf Coast Canal and Okeechobee Land Company to take care of legal requirements. And, to supervise the operations, he employed a young fellow from New Orleans who had had much experience in drainage work.

That young fellow, then only 23 years old, was Capt. J. Fred Menge, a man who was destined to play an important part in the future history of Fort Myers.

#### *The First Drainage Canal Is Opened*

A strange sound was heard in Fort Myers on Wednesday, September 21, 1881. It was the hoarse wailing of a tug boat whistle and came from far down the river. Everyone ran to the dock at the foot of Hendry Street to see what it was.

Soon the tug boat came in sight. It was towing a huge, grotesque-shaped dredge, the first that had ever appeared on the Caloosahatchee. Here at last was proof that Hamilton Disston meant business. The long-awaited dredging operations in the Everglades were to be started.

The dredge was built in Cedar Keys under the supervision of Captain Menge. Its great steel bucket, which hung like a basket from a derrick, was operated by a wood-burning steam engine mounted on the deck. Captain Menge came along with the contraption to put it into operation.

Anchoring the dredge in the river, Captain Menge came ashore. He spent the night at the home of Captain Hendry and explained how the drainage project was to be handled. He said that Disston's experts had told him the work should be completed in three years at the most. "They said it is a simple job and that the Glades can be made as dry as a bone," Menge related.

The next day Menge made arrangements to have a warehouse built for storing supplies he had brought along. He also opened an account at the Parker-Blount general store and for nearly a decade thereafter he was the store's best customer.

Difficulty was encountered in floating the dredge through the upper reaches of the river. Several projecting points of land had to be cut off before the dredge could be got through. A channel had to be

dredged the entire five-mile length of shallow Lake Flirt, no trace of which now remains. The most trouble was experienced in blasting a canal through the rocky land just west of Lake Hicpochee. A dam had to be built every four miles to obtain sufficient water to float the dredge.

When the time came to take the last shovelful of rock and earth between the canal and Lake Hicpochee a crowd gathered to witness a magnificent spectacle as the water in the Glades found an outlet to the Gulf. People came from all the surrounding country in ox carts and on horseback. Others came up from Fort Myers on Captain Nelson's sputtering "Spitfire." But all the spectators were greatly disappointed. When the last barrier was removed the water did not rush out in a torrent as expected. It merely flowed out sluggishly into the canal.

But Captain Menge was not surprised. The rainy season had not yet started and there was little water in the Glades. After the rains began, he said, there would be enough water in the canal to float a good-sized steamer. Captain Hendry, who was watching operations carefully, was supremely optimistic. He was positive the Everglades could be drained and he was equally positive that the canal would provide a wonderful waterway and aid tremendously in the development of the Glades region.

He prophesied that by the following winter "steamers built at Pittsburgh may descend the Mississippi, steam along our Gulf coast, ascend the Caloosahatchee into Lake Okeechobee, and after traversing that region of the unknown and steaming up the Kissimmee, wake the echoes of Orange County as they greet the new Kissimmee City rising like magic in a wilderness of tropical verdure."

Captain Hendry was no more enthusiastic than countless others. The reclamation project was one of the greatest ever undertaken in the United States and almost everyone was confident it would be successful. It was the talk of the country. Reporters came from Philadelphia, New York and Chicago to tell of the progress that was being made.

A canal between Lake Hicpochee and Lake Okeechobee was completed by Captain Menge during August, 1883. This made it possible for shallow-draft boats to go from the Gulf to any point on the great inland lake. Overly optimistic, Disston believed that steamers would be able to go through the lake and on up the Kissimmee River to Kissimmee City. So he helped organize the Kissimmee, Okeechobee and Gulf Steam Navigation Company to put a Fort Myers-Kissimmee run into operation.

Officials of the new company located and bought the "Bertha Lee," a two-decked, wood-burning stern wheeler then operating on the Ohio River. The steamer was brought down the Mississippi, through the Gulf and up the Caloosahatchee, piloted by Capt. Benjamin F. Hall, Jr.

Disston was positive that the first trip to Kissimmee through the virgin heart of the peninsula would be a glorious, history-making event so he invited a number of his northern friends, and Tallahassee politicians, and newspapermen to accompany him on the "Bertha Lee's" maiden journey. The party left Fort Myers on September 20. Disston expected that Kis-

simme would be reached in three days, but he was fated to be gravely disappointed.

The "Bertha Lee" was 130 feet long and drew three feet of water. She was entirely too large to navigate the narrow, shallow canals which had been dredged by Captain Menge. Time after time she got stuck and had to be pulled out. Twice Captain Menge had to throw up dams to get enough water to keep her floating. A week passed before Lake Okeechobee was reached.

But that was just the beginning of the journey. Going up the narrow, twisting Kissimmee River, Captain Hall encountered all sorts of difficulties. Sometimes a whole day was required to get around one tortuous bend. Supplies became exhausted and the deck hands worked themselves almost to death. The "Bertha Lee" did not reach Kissimmee until November 2, forty-three days after starting.

Fortunately for Fort Myers, Disston's party did not remain long on the "Bertha Lee." All the passengers left the steamer at Fort Thompson and stopped a few days at the ranch home of Capt. F. A. Hendry. While there Disston took a group of newspapermen up the canal on Capt. Peter Nelson's "Spitfire" and showed them the work being done toward starting a sugar cane plantation in the rich muckland between Lake Hicpochee and Lake Okeechobee. Lateral canals were being dug to drain off the water and Disston predicted that within another two years the finest sugar cane plantation in all the world would be located there. Traces of the lateral drainage canals could be seen half a century later.

Leaving the "Bertha Lee" behind, the Disston party went back down the river and was entertained lavishly at the home of Howell Parker. Perhaps because of the entertainment the newspapermen left Fort Myers greatly impressed with its possibilities for future growth. They wrote glowing articles about the town when they got back home, stressing its fine climate and its strategic location on "the gateway river to the mighty kingdom of the Glades."

Because of the wide publicity and the optimistic predictions of developments which were coming, men and women of spirit and courage began heading for Fort Myers and the Caloosahatchee Valley from all parts of the country. They wanted to make their home in this fair land of promise. Public spirited and progressive, they soon became leaders in the community.

Between 1882 and 1886 Fort Myers grew more than it had grown during the seventeen years following the close of the Civil War. Here are just a few of the pioneers who came: Dr. William Hanson, from Essex, England; Edward L. Evans and Thomas J. Evans, from New Orleans; Dr. T. E. Langford and Taff O. Langford, from Madison, Fla.; Capt. H. L. Roan, from Tampa; W. P. Gardner, his son, Albertus A., and his daughter, Miranda M., from Cleveland, O.; the Jeffcott brothers, Irishmen who came by way of London; Capt. William H. Towles, from Perry, Fla.; Henry B. Hoyer, from Marine, Ill.; Robert A. Henderson, from Madison, Fla.; Carl F. Roberts, from Rock Island, Ill.; the Travers brothers, from

Sydney, Australia; the Stout family, from Holton, Kansas; Dr. L. C. Washburn, from Ohio; Reinhold Kinzie, from Germany; C. T. Tooke, from Jefferson County, Ga.; T. M. Park, from Buenavista, Ga.; and Dan C. Kantz, Edward P. Kantz and their sister, Mrs. Sarah Knight Titus, from Snider County, Pennsylvania. All those and many, many others.

Every one of these newcomers contributed something to Fort Myers and their names appear often in the later history of the town. Mention must be made here, however, of the Kantz family. Pennsylvania Dutch, they built Fort Myers' first hotel in 1882 on the river front near the foot of Park Street. Two stories high, of frame construction, it had twenty rooms for guests, a large dining room, an impressive parlor, a detached kitchen, and a wharf. It was heralded as the finest hotel south of Tampa and the biggest social events of the community were held there for years.

The hotel was paid for by Daniel C. Kantz, who came to Fort Myers primarily to be principal of the school, and by his sister, Mrs. Titus. They named it the Keystone, after their native state. Two years later they changed the name to the "Caloosa Hotel."

Peter O. Knight, the son of Mrs. Titus, came to visit her in the early summer of 1884. He had just been graduated from Valpariso University, in Indiana, and was chockful of knowledge and confidence. Wanting to make a good impression, he was wearing a spike-tailed coat and a silk hat when he arrived. Years later, after he had become Tampa's leading citizen and nationally known, he told why he discarded his formal outfit.

"The evening of my first day in Fort Myers convinced me that this wilderness town wasn't a silk hat, boiled shirt community," he related. "I was sitting on a bench in front of one of the two stores. Along came a fellow considerably the worse for liquor. Another native was seated close by me. The drunk lined up in front of him.

"'Jim,' he hiccupped, 'pull my finger!' Jim refused. 'I say, pull my finger!' the drunk insisted. Jim still refused.

"'The hell you won't—I'll just show you that you will!' the drunk shouted. He lurched back and pulled a long meat Skinner's knife from his belt. Jim scrambled into the store and came back with a shotgun. A couple of the drunk's friends grabbed him, took the knife away from him, forced him into an oxcart, tied him down and drove off.

"The incident impressed me so much that I asked a bystander if the drunk would have really killed Jim if he hadn't been tied down, and just because Jim wouldn't pull his finger.

"The bystander replied: 'Well, it's thisaway, stranger. You see every time that fellow Bill gets drunk he goes around and asks some gent to pull his finger. And when the gent pulls the finger, Bill he jest spits a wad of terbaccier juice into the gent's eye. And Bill laughs and laughs. But when the gent won't pull his finger, he gits mighty mad—and he's cut up several gents pretty fierce. And say, stranger, it's dog-goned funny he didn't ask you to pull his finger. Almost always he goes after gents dressed fancy like. And gosh, stranger, you're dressed up fit to kill!'

"Right then and there I decided that Fort Myers wasn't the place to be wearing my silk hat, boiled shirt and spike-tailed coat. The next day I put on a flannel shirt and a beaten-up Stetson hat. I looked as hard as any of the cowboys on the street. I was becoming educated."

Not all the newcomers who arrived in the Land of the Caloosahatchee in the early 80's settled in Fort Myers. Many of them homesteaded or bought land along the river, starting farms and setting out small groves. Several began raising coconuts and pineapples and nearly all had patches of sugar cane which they depended upon for the money crop and which provided them with sweets.

Much of the best land in the Twelve Mile Creek district had been taken up before by "old timers" from Fort Myers who left the village to homestead. The pioneers there were Frank J. Wilson, W. S. Clay, Owen R. Blount and Taylor Frierson. The later divided his time between his grove on the creek and Fort Myers where he still operated the Frierson House. A newcomer on the creek was T. S. Colby who set out a grove.

At Hickey's Creek, a few miles above Twelve Mile Creek, Dennis O. Hickey homesteaded and in 1885 was raising large crops of cabbage, egg plant and squash. He had a neighbor, Locklar, who also raised produce.

Farther up the river, farms and groves were being well established in 1885 by A. S. Lovejoy, Capt. Albert Cutler, John H. Hollingsworth, A. G. T. Parkinson, L. G. Thorp and Reinhold Kinzie. Thorpe had the first sugar mill on the river and ground cane for pioneers who came to his place from many miles away with their oxcarts loaded heavily with cane. Kinzie brought in the first beehives and was getting well started in the

View on Caloosahatchee River, Fort Myers, Fla.

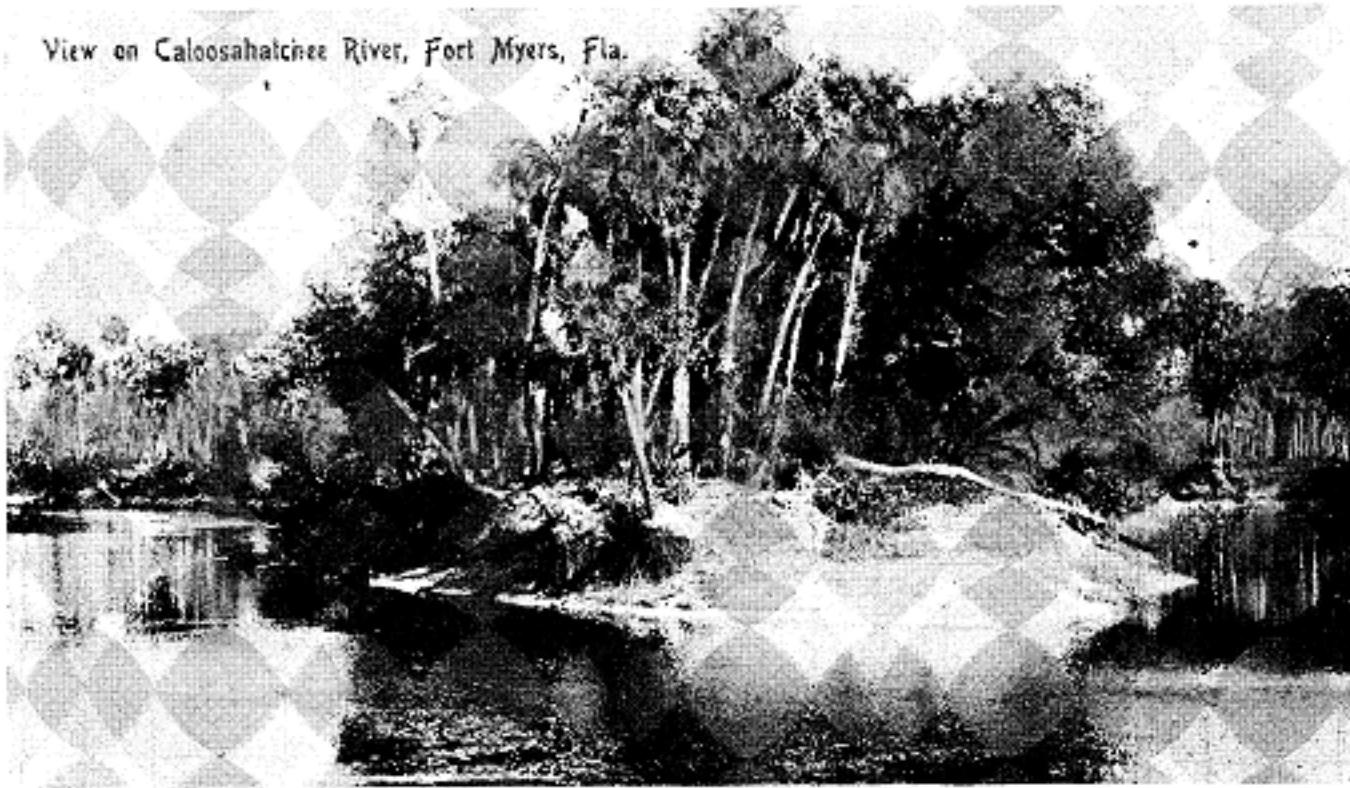


Photo Courtesy of Mrs. Harry A. Laycock

To get by this tortuous bend in the Caloosahatchee, steamboat captains had to tie their boats to trees on the bank and warp them around. Because such warping always was required at this tricky place in the river it became known as "Rope Bend."

business of raising honey when he became ill and died, leaving his widow and children to fend for themselves—which they did, splendidly.

The tiny village of Alva, surveyed in 1883 by Capt. Peter Nelson for a town site, by 1885 was getting well established. The captain, who had come from Denmark many years before and had taken a liking to the Caloosahatchee, named the village after a little white flower he found growing there. He set aside ten acres on the river for a town park and dedicated land for a church and school which he helped to build himself. He also built a small library, the first anywhere south of Tampa.

Members of the English family were old timers in the Alva section before the village itself was founded. They had come to the Caloosahatchee in 1876 and settled first near Fort Denaud. But they did not like it there and acquired land near Alva a year later and set out a grove. Three sons of the family, H. S., John C., and Arch became leaders in the community. Their mother was known throughout the region as the Good Samaritan of the Caloosahatchee. Whenever anyone became sick or destitute she made it her business to see that he got help and, when necessary, took him to her home and cared for him until he became well and strong again.

John C. English was married to Mrs. Ida Blount Stebbins, widow of Charles Hyde Stebbins, in 1892. One of their sons, John Colin English, became head of the State Department of Education and in 1948 ran third in a field of nine candidates for the Democratic nomination for governor.

Other prominent settlers in or near Alva in 1885 were H. G. Burnet, Capt. J. B. McKinney, Dr. James Kellum, Peter Fichter, Max von Erdmannsdorff, Paul G. Burnet and Edward Parkinson.

The growing of pineapples became a much-talked-about industry in the mid-eighties. Capt. Thomas Johnson was the pioneer. He brought in 1,500 Puerto Rican slips in 1884 and set them out on his land across the river. When the fruit ripened the following year they were found to be unusually sweet and delicious. Johnson sent fifteen crates to Key West where they were purchased by buyers for the New York market. The pineapples, which averaged ten pounds, brought sixty cents each. The industry held such promise that almost every settler up and down the river soon started a pinery. Dr. J. V. Harris had the largest, planting 22,000 slips in 1885.

Another industry which looked promising was the growing of coconuts. In 1884, W. T. Forbes and Karl Kraemer planted 1,300 trees on a 60-acre grove a few miles down the river and employed a superintendent to care for them. Proof that coconuts would flourish was furnished by the trees which had been planted in 1860 by Major James Evans along the river. All were bearing nuts.

Across the river from Fort Myers John Powell and R. G. Corbett had citrus groves in bearing by 1885, the first anywhere along the river. Jacob Daughtry lived nearby and had many acres in sugar cane and cabbage. Settlers even penetrated far into the back country. Robert A.

Carson had a large tract in sugar cane and vegetables 25 miles southeast of Fort Myers and was reported to be making good profits.

Everywhere in the Land of the Caloosahatchee the future looked most promising in the autumn of 1884—so promising that the progressive citizens of Fort Myers decided it was high time that their community had a newspaper. In getting one, fortune favored them.

#### *A Newspaper Editor Is Shanghaied*

Stafford C. Cleveland, publisher of the Yates County Chronicle in Penn Yan, N. Y., suffered from ill health during the summer of 1884. His doctor told him that unless he got away from the vicious New York winters he could not expect to live to see another spring.

Editor Cleveland straightway made up his mind to go to Florida and, buying some second-hand newspaper equipment, including an old Miehle flat-bed press, made his way to Cedar Keys, then the one and only railroad terminal on the Florida West Coast. One of his old friends in New York who had cruised down the West Coast the year before to fish and hunt, told him that Fort Ogden on the Peace River, above Charlotte Harbor, was a community with a future so that's where he was headed.

At Cedar Keys he loaded his equipment on the "Lily White," a trim, two-masted schooner which then was making irregular trips up and down the coast, stopping at almost all towns along the way. The captain of the schooner was Henry L. Roan, a resident of Fort Myers.

Captain Roan knew as well as anyone that Fort Myers needed a newspaper and when he learned that he had a bonafide newspaper editor on board, and a whole newspaper plant to boot, he made up his mind that Editor Cleveland would never get to Fort Ogden—not if he could help it. So instead of going in to Charlotte Harbor and stopping first at Fort Ogden, as he ordinarily did, Captain Roan headed straight for Fort Myers.

Arriving there, the tricky captain called "the gang" together, informed them of the notable personage on the "Lily White" and told them to get busy. The gang did—all the members of it: Capt. F. A. Hendry, Howell Parker, Jehu Blount, Peter O. Knight, Marion Hendry, Taylor Frierson, Tom Langford, C. J. Huelsenkamp, Ed L. Evans, Carl F. Roberts, and one of the gang's newest members, W. P. Gardner, a rabid Fort Myers booster if there ever was one.

They rushed to the dock where Editor Cleveland was patiently waiting for the schooner to pull out again and gave him the works. Eloquently they told of the wonders of Fort Myers and in glowing terms they informed him of its tremendous possibilities for growth. As for Fort Ogden—shucks that tiny place never would amount to anything! Right here at Fort Myers, they chorused, was the place for Editor Cleveland to settle down, set up his newspaper plant, and become rich and influential.

Captain Hendry guaranteed him 300 subscribers for a year. Gardner said he would pay \$600 to help him meet initial expenses. Parker, Huelsenkamp, Frierson and many others promised they would be regular advertisers. Evans and Roberts told him they would handle the job of setting up the plant—without charge. Almost overwhelmed by the offers and the attention he was getting, Editor Cleveland capitulated. His equipment was unloaded and installed in a small frame building at First and Jackson.

On Saturday, November 22, 1884, the first issue of Editor Cleveland's paper appeared—the Fort Myers Press. And a mighty fine newspaper it proved to be. Few newspapers published anywhere in Florida at that time excelled it in quality. During the years which followed the Press helped tremendously in the development of Fort Myers and the entire Caloosahatchee region.

Following are the news stories carried in the first issue of The Press:

"Messrs. P. C. Gaines, H. F. M. Highsmith, J. T. Andrews and J. T. Henley have just returned from an alligator hunt of one month on Lake Hicpochee and Okeechobee. They found it a laborious and not very remunerative hunt. The wet weather increased the difficulty of their work and they succeeded in killing only 142 alligators. As alligator skins bring but 50 to 75 cents each the reward for a month's labor was not large. However, the exhilaration of the hunt and roughing it on the lakes and along the swamps furnished another sort of compensation.

"Dr. William Hanson assisted by Dr. William Foos performed a successful amputation of the leg of John Coats on Thursday.

"C. T. Tooke is removing his saloon from First Street to the corner of Hendry and Garrett streets.

"Dr. T. E. Langford is having his yard covered with shell. This is a step in the right direction. Beautify your homes.

"J. J. Blount after a sojourn of several days on the cattle range reports that the country is too wet and that the cattle in consequence are not doing well.

"Peter O. Knight, who is spending the winter in Fort Myers and looking around for a suitable professional location, has just returned from a visit to the Pine Level court. We hope he will take kindly to our country and locate for he will make a splendid member of society and a worthy auxiliary of the Florida bar.

"Two deaths must be announced this week. Dr. Richard C. Anderson, aged 65 years, on October 27, 1884, and Louis Lanier Hendry, two-year-old son of Louis A. and Ella C. Hendry."

The largest advertisement in the first issue was carried by the Fort Myers Land Agency, composed of C. J. Huelsenkamp and William A. Roberts, the first real estate brokers of the town. Their first ad was a rather sedate affair but later they really rang the bell ballyhooing Fort Myers as: "THE ITALY OF AMERICA—and the—Only True Sanitarium of the Occidental Hemisphere! Equaling if not surpassing the Bay of

Naples in grandeur of view and health giving properties!" No wonder the firm sold real estate.

The second largest ad was carried by H. A. Parker & Co., the general store at First and Hendry. The ad stated that the firm dealt in "staple goods of all kinds, dry goods, groceries, hardware, fancy goods, clothing, millinery, and all branches of family supplies as sugars, teas, coffees, etc., of the best quality and a great variety of articles not easily enumerated and all sold at low prices to suit the times and save money for our customers."

Two other general stores advertised in early issues of the Press. They were owned by Henry L. Roan, who announced that he was paying top prices for egret plumes, alligator hides and deer skins, and by Edward L. Evans, who insisted that he charged the lowest prices for the highest priced merchandise. "You can buy anything at Evans'," he declared.

Three hotels were steady advertisers: The Keystone Hotel, operated by Mrs. S. E. Titus, mother of Peter O. Knight; the Frierson House, operated by Taylor Frierson, and the Braman House, at First and Hendry, owned by Charles H. Braman. The last two advertised as hotels but were in reality boarding houses. Frierson stated he had "several large and commodious rooms open for the accommodation of guests" and that "the table will be supplied with the best the market affords."

Mrs. M. A. Anderson advertised her drug store at First and Jackson and stated that prescriptions would be carefully compounded by H. B. Hoyer, manager. Dr. William W. Foos carried a business card saying his residence and office were located in the Frierson House, as if everyone didn't know it.

Of course Editor Cleveland advertised that he was ready to do general job work and commercial printing, "neatly and with dispatch," for no weekly paper ever existed in those days without its job plant where the editor spent most of his time feeding the job presses to augment his meagre income from the weekly publication.

During the following winter the Press became well established and both the advertising and circulation increased steadily. In New York, Editor Cleveland had been a red-hot Republican but in Fort Myers he swam with the Democratic tide, and got along splendidly.

He painstakingly covered all the news but there was one story that winter which he certainly did not overplay—the arrival in Fort Myers of the man who later became known throughout the world as the Wizard of Menlo Park.

#### *Curiosity Brought a Famous Visitor*

During the winter of 1884-85 the weather in St. Augustine, then the big tourist town of Florida, was wet and miserable. Because it was, Fort Myers won a winter resident who helped immeasurably in spreading its fame throughout the world.

One of St. Augustine's visitors that winter was Thomas A. Edison. He had come south to relax from his arduous labors and recuperate in the warm sunshine. But instead of sunshine he found rains, and dismal fogs, and chill winds. Disgusted, he was about ready to return north when a friend told him that over on the lower West Coast the weather was ideal even during the coldest winter months.

Dubious but also curious, Edison decided to find out for himself what the West Coast was like. With two friends, L. A. Smith, of New York, and his business associate, E. T. Gilliland, he went to Cedar Keys by railroad and there engaged Capt. Dan Paul's yacht "Jeannette" for a cruise down the Gulf. One of the yacht hands was Nick Armeda, then 16 years old, who knew the West Coast like a book.

Sailing leisurely along, the party reached Punta Rassa on Wednesday, March 4. Armeda told Edison about the cable office on the point and of course the great inventor, a telegrapher himself in earlier years, had to stop and look it over. George Shultz, manager of the station, entertained him royally.

The next day, while sitting on the veranda smoking cigars, Shultz told Edison about the village up the river located on the site of old Fort Myers where the long Seminole War had been brought to a close by the surrender of Chief Billy Bowlegs and his tribesmen. His curiosity aroused, Edison decided to see the village.

Arriving at Fort Myers late Friday afternoon, Edison told Captain Paul to dock the "Jeannette" at the wharf of the Keystone Hotel. That evening he strolled through the village and was deeply impressed by its tropical beauty, its solitude, and the friendliness of the people. It appeared to be an ideal spot for a winter home.

Edison stopped in at the office of Huelsenkamp & Cranford the next day and asked if any desirable nearby waterfront tracts were for sale.

C. J. Huelsenkamp, senior partner of the firm and rabid Fort Myers booster, thereupon proceeded to make one of the most important sales in the history of South Florida. He took Edison a mile down the river and showed him the Summerlin place, a 13-acre tract purchased by Samuel Summerlin from Francisco Abril a few years before for \$500. Huelsenkamp said he might be able to persuade Summerlin to sell. Edison told him to go ahead and try, and that he would buy it if the price was right.

Edison and his friends left Fort Myers the next day. Editor Cleveland dismissed the whole affair with a three-line personal to the effect that Mr. Thomas A. Edison, a distinguished electrician, had been in town and was contemplating buying the Summerlin place. That was all.

On the following September 19, the deal for the Summerlin property was closed, Edison paying \$2750. For those days that was an exorbitantly stiff price but Edison never stopped bragging about the good bargain he had made.

After buying the land Edison purchased enough Maine lumber to build two homes, one for himself and one for his friend Gilliland, and had it shipped to Fort Myers. The houses were constructed during the following winter by Eli Thompson and a crew of carpenters. They were

not finished, however, when Edison arrived early in March, 1886, with his bride, the former Miss Mina Miller, of Akron, O., to whom he was married on February 24. Mr. and Mrs. Edison stayed at the Keystone Hotel until their home was completed. Late in April they returned north.

Equipment for a laboratory, a forty-horsepower steam engine and a dynamo were shipped to Seminole Lodge, as Edison called his estate, early in 1887 and when Edison returned again in March he started working at once to put an electric light plant into operation.

Lights were turned on at Seminole Lodge for the first time on Saturday night, March 27, 1887. For Fort Myers it was a history making event and almost everyone in town wandered out to Edison's home that evening to witness the miracle of science.

People also confidently expected that Edison would provide street lights for the town. He had said in March, 1886, that he would do so the following winter but the promise did not materialize.

On April 21, 1887, the Press stated: "The dynamo to be used in lighting the town of Fort Myers by electricity arrived one day last week. As Mr. Edison is very busy and his stay short, we have our doubts as to whether he will light Fort Myers by electricity this year or not. They are very busy at the laboratory and can hardly spare the time to put up the lamps, etc., which are also here and ready for use. However, the plant will be put in operation in good season next winter and we'll all rejoice."



*Photo Courtesy of Mrs. Yent*

Under the inspiring leadership of up-and-coming Peter O. Knight, shown wearing the white jacket, members of this band, the first in Fort Myers, played loud and long at all important gatherings in "cow town" days.

But Edison did not return the following winter. He left Fort Myers on Wednesday, May 4, 1887, and did not come back again for fourteen years, arriving next on February 27, 1901. During the intervening time he was busy on his countless inventions and Mrs. Edison was busy with her young children. But Edison continued to maintain Seminole Lodge and while he was away his gardener made it into a tropical paradise.

### *Fort Myers Becomes a Full Fledged Town*

The once infant frontier cow town of Fort Myers had good reason to strut with pride in the early summer of 1885. A census had just been taken and it was learned that the population had soared to 349.

That made Fort Myers the second largest town on the entire West Coast south of Cedar Keys. Only Tampa was larger. Tarpon Springs, Clearwater, Disston City, Pinellas, Safety Harbor, Manatee, Sarasota and Fort Ogden had all been settled but not one could top the 300 mark.

Fort Myers beat them all—no wonder it was proud!

For months the people of Fort Myers had mulled over the idea of incorporating as a town but not until the nose-counting was completed did the village leaders decide that incorporation could be delayed no longer.

The need for all sorts of public improvements was becoming acute and none could be obtained until town taxes could be levied. Besides, there was a dire need for better law enforcement. Cow hunters came into the village every Saturday night and cut up something scandalous and no one was on the job to make them toe the mark. Town officials were needed just for law enforcement, if for nothing else. Incorporation could be delayed no longer.

To bring the issue to a head a group of village leaders signed a notice calling for an election Wednesday night, August 12, 1885, at the school house "academy" at Second and Jackson.

Forty-five electors responded to the call. Capt. F. A. Hendry was appointed chairman and Howell A. Parker secretary. A formal motion to incorporate was passed by a unanimous vote. The only discussion was over the name the town should have. Francis M. Hendry said he thought it should be called "Myers" to conform with its post office designation. He was shouted down. The village had always been called Fort Myers—and Fort Myers it would always be, regardless of what Washington said about it!

A pineapple in full bloom was adopted as the official insignia, to be used on the town seal. The pineapple was thus honored because it was then the fruit of all fruits in the Land of the Caloosahatchee and almost every home had a pinery.

Of the 45 who voted, 22 had their names on the first election slate as candidates for office. Ten were elected: Howell A. Parker, as mayor; F. A. Hendry, N. L. Langford, J. T. Haskew, Wm. M. Hendry, J. J. Blount,

W. A. Roberts, and J. O. Braman, as councilmen; C. H. Stebbins, as clerk, and C. L. Oliver, as marshall.

The names of the citizens who voted in this historic election must be preserved. They were: T. M. Park, Charles H. Stebbins, E. L. Evans, A. J. Allen, Joseph Santana, Daniel C. Kantz, R. Rofina, J. W. Roan, James P. Perkins, C. H. Leathlean, J. F. M. Highsmith, M. S. Gonzalez, Lew C. Stewart, C. T. Tooke, W. C. Tyre, J. D. Thompson, J. J. Blount, Hardy Carter, T. H. Levens, D. O. Hickey, W. F. Powell, C. L. Oliver, Virgil Homer, Charles A. Brown, C. H. Funck, John O. Braman, H. B. Hoyer, J. L. Cutler, Daniel Flint, Z. J. Brown, C. J. Huelsenkamp, H. A. Parker, John B. Hickey, T. E. Langford, H. L. Roan, James Evans, N. L. Langford, B. E. Henderson, J. T. Haskew, F. A. Hendry, Frank M. Hendry, Wm. M. Hendry, W. M. Brown, W. R. Perkins, and John Pool.

Those men were the "fathers" of Fort Myers.

One man who signed the call for the election did not vote when the time came to cast his ballot. He was Peter O. Knight. And the reason he didn't vote was that he wasn't yet 21 years old, even though he was a town leader. At the next election he was chosen mayor.

Seven other signers of the election notice also failed to appear and vote, either because they could not be present or because they lived outside the proposed town limits. They were: Taylor Frierson, Miquel Moralez, Irvin S. Singletary, J. A. Miles, E. P. Kantz, Wm. A. Roberts, and L. A. Hendry.

### *This Was the Town of Fort Myers*

No magic change occurred in Fort Myers as a result of incorporation.

For many, many months thereafter it continued to remain much as it was before, a rugged, straggling frontier cattle town where cow hunters frolicked on Saturday afternoons, where ox teams labored through the sand, where the howling of wolves far in the back country could be heard on quiet nights, and where the arrival of tramp schooners still provided the most excitement.

Not one street was paved, or even graded. First Street, or Front Street as it was more commonly known, was a thoroughfare in name only. It was nothing but a sandy, weed-grown open space stretching between two irregular rows of unpainted, cheaply constructed frame buildings housing general stores, saloons, livery stables, blacksmith shops, and miscellaneous establishments of little consequence.

There were no sidewalks anywhere in town, not even in the "business section." One of the first ordinances passed by the newly-elected council stipulated that sidewalks must be built by abutting property owners, but no one paid any attention to the ordinance. Another ordinance stated that the streets should be "cared for" at town's expense but since the town had no money in its treasury, the ordinance meant nothing.

There were no street lights, of course, and on moonless nights people who ventured outdoors had to carry lanterns to find their way.

There was no public water system and residents still depended on cisterns or shallow wells for their water supply. Many of the wells were contaminated by nearby privies and dysentery was a common ailment. Malaria, or "chills and fever" as it was known, was prevalent; people blamed the "miasma" from mangrove swamps down the river. Had anyone said that mosquitoes, breeding in the cisterns and pools of stagnant water, were spreading the disease, he would have been ridiculed. The common remedy for the chills and fever was Blue Mass pills and turpentine balls—if that failed to cure the patient his case was hopeless. He just had to keep on chillin' and shakin'.

Seminoles wandered into town as they had in days gone by, bringing their alligator teeth and hides, their crane and egret plumes, their skins of deer, and their pelts of otter, bear, beaver and panther. In payment they took kettles and knives, thread and needles, tobacco and candy, grits and bacon, and occasionally one of those hand-operated Singer sewing machines which were so marvelous.

Of course the Seminole women always demanded flamboyant calico in yellow, red and black, the striking colors of the coral snake, with which they made their tribal dress.

The Seminole braves always wanted liquor and when they got it, drank themselves into a stupor. But they never caused any trouble. One always remained stone sober to herd the others home. Then, when his roistering brothers sobered up, he took his turn.

The Indians often camped on the outskirts of town or even in the yards of the town residents. James E. Hendry, Jr., recalls that when he was a youngster he often awakened on rainy mornings to find a family of Seminoles bedded down on the front porch of his home. Occasionally they asked for handouts; they never asked for work. Hard labor was what the foolish white people did to make money they worried over; the Indians would have no part of it—it didn't agree with them.

Cattlemen complained occasionally about the Seminoles making off with some of their fine young steers. They didn't remember that many of the ancestors of these fine young steers once were the property of the Indians—and had been left behind, and appropriated by the cattlemen, when the Indians were forced to emigrate to a reservation in the West.

Roaming cattle caused the residents of Fort Myers no end of trouble. They wandered over all the streets and through people's yards, trampling gardens and eating grass and shrubbery. Every yard had to be fenced in if the owner hoped to keep any growing things around his home. One of the first ordinances passed by the council provided for impounding the cattle pests but the cattle barons raised so much objection that the ordinance was conveniently forgotten. And the cattle roamed at will.

Fort Myers was a rough and rugged cow town, true enough, but the people loved it. For them, nothing was more beautiful than the moonlight shining through the lacelike fronds of the coconuts growing along the Caloosahatchee, and nothing more soothing than the wind murmuring in the pines and palms. For them, the rush and bustle of city life was

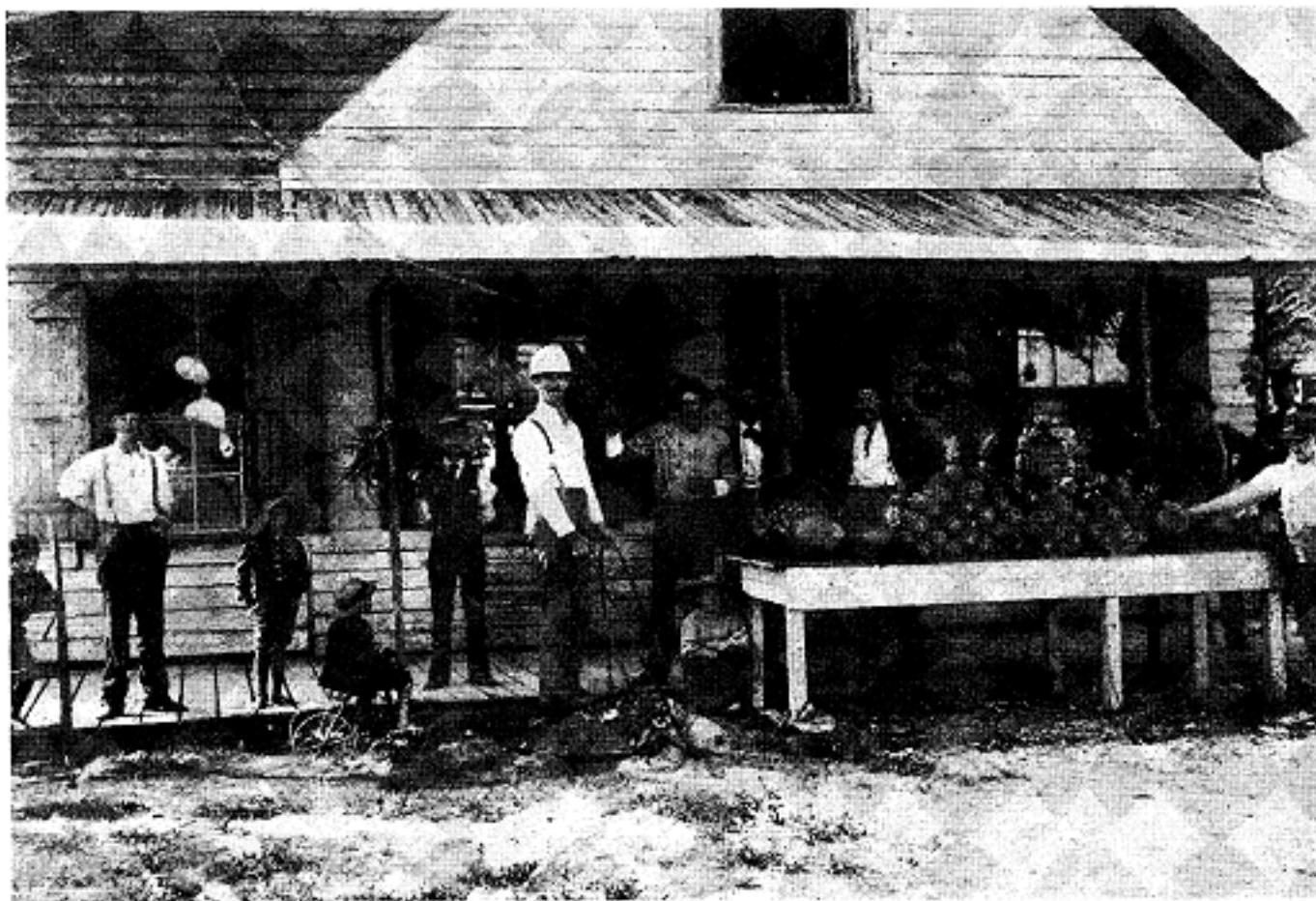
abhorrent; they infinitely preferred living in a place where life went on at an easy pace, and everyone was friendly.

No one worried about being able to get enough to eat. Almost every family had its garden where all the vegetables needed were grown and a little grove which supplied an abundance of fruit. The crystal clear waters of the Caloosahatchee, as yet unmuddied by drainage from the Glades, were alive with fish—all kinds of fish. They were so plentiful and so easy to catch that none of the stores handled them for sale. Why try to sell something which could be got for nothing?

A few miles out in the back country wild turkeys and deer could still be found without much trouble. Hunters rarely went out without bringing back enough game to supply their families and all their friends for a week or more.

Wives of cattlemen often accompanied their husbands on their long trips to the woods where the cattle ranged, just to stock their larder. Venison and turkey breasts were salted overnight and then smoked for several days on palmetto platforms under which cypress logs were kept smoldering. Old timers say that game cured in this manner kept indefinitely and that when it was fried, after being soaked overnight to remove the salt, it was tender and delicious, as good as any game fresh killed.

For those who liked to chew there was always Florida beef priced at almost nothing. Some idea of what strangers thought about this native



*Photo Courtesy of Mrs. A. L. Kinzie*

Everything from turtles to caskets was sold at Jehu Blount's general store on the northwest corner of First and Hendry. This photo was taken in 1886.

beef is given in an article written by Sidney Smith, a staff correspondent of the New York World who came to interview Edison in March, 1887. Smith concluded his dispatch by saying: "Mr. Edison expects his foreman down shortly and he intends to score up a piece of belting, fry it, and place it before the newcomer as a favorable specimen of Florida beef, which article of food is so tough that persistent hacking is required to cut and divide the gravy."

The young people of Fort Myers always managed to have a good time. Dancing was frowned upon as sinful but no one frowned when young couples strolled out on the dock on moonlit nights, hand in hand, or courted each other on the old wooden bench under the big rubber tree across the street from the Methodist Church. To the young people this seat was known as "Lovers' Retreat."

Everyone, young and old, found enjoyment at the monthly meetings of the Fort Myers Debating and Literary Society, organized on December 13, 1884, with Peter O. Knight as president; Miss Belle Hendry, secretary; Miss Ida Roan, treasurer; and Capt. Robert Lilly, critic. At the first meeting Miss Pearl Hendry read an original essay entitled "A Trip to the Wonderful Moon" and Mrs. Julia Hanson read an article entitled "Are Women Intelligent Enough to Vote?" Other speakers were P. C. Gaines, C. J. Huelsenkamp, J. W. Perkins, F. M. Hendry, Dr. W. W. Foos and D. S. Colby. Besides the speakers the membership included J. P. Perkins, E. P. Kantz, J. L. Cutler, Miss Ella Blount, W. M. Fraser, Capt. Peter Nelson, J. P. Cochrane, Edward M. Hendry and S. C. Cleveland.

Of course the newly incorporated town had to have a band to herald its new importance. So one was organized by fourteen musicians and would-be musicians November 21, 1885, at the home of Mrs. S. E. Titus on Jackson Street. Instruments, paid for by public subscription, were received two months later and the bandsmen began practicing weekly at the Titus home. Before long, however, neighbors started objecting to the "hideous noise" and the bandsmen moved to the end of the town dock where the blasts, wafting in over the water, were somewhat muted.

The first public appearance of the band occurred on March 25, 1886, when it marched to Seminole Lodge and serenaded Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A. Edison who had just moved into their new home. Mrs. Edison later said she had never before heard such ethereal music—but perhaps that was because the Edisons were then still honeymooning.

Members of that first band were J. L. Cutler, P. C. Gaines, W. M. Jameson, Ed L. Evans, Peter O. Knight, E. P. Kantz, C. J. Huelsenkamp, W. R. Perkins, W. R. Washburn, D. C. Kantz, C. L. Oliver, John Jeffcott, and William Jeffcott.

Because of general prosperity, Fort Myers was in a mood for celebrating anything and everything during 1885. The first big celebration was held March 4 to commemorate the inauguration of the first Democratic president in over a quarter century, Grover Cleveland.

The boys took up a collection and invested the money in powder, kerosene, fireworks, balloons and sacks of oysters for an oyster roast.

The powder was used most effectively. A large quantity of it was placed between two anvils at First and Hendry and the fuse was lit. The explosion was horrendous. One of the anvils was shattered and large fragments were hurled through nearby stores, playing havoc with the nerves of innocent bystanders. As another feature of the celebration, a barrel of kerosene was taken out on the river on a float and ignited. The boys thought it would explode with a roar which could be heard at Punta Rassa but instead it merely burned, for hours. But everyone enjoyed the fireworks and balloon ascension that evening and particularly the oyster roast which climaxed the grand event.

This celebration was a mild affair, however, compared to the celebration held at Christmas time in 1885. It started with fireworks on Christmas eve and was continued with a "beef shoot" on Christmas morning in which the best marksmen of the entire region competed for a fine young steer. James E. Hendry, E. L. Evans, C. T. Tooke, R. F. Wilkinson and W. R. Perkins had high scores and divided the steer between them.

Christmas evening almost everyone in town attended a grand Christmas party given by Peter O. Knight at the Keystone Hotel. To start the merry making an egg hunt was held and when enough eggs were brought forth from the places where they had been hidden a great bowl of eggnog was mixed, very rich in "nog." Old timers recall that it had a potency equalled only by the kick of a very angry mule. It was long remembered.

On the day after Christmas the whole town turned out to witness a cowboy tournament. This was no ordinary cowboy affair of a rodeo variety. It was something like the knightly tournaments held in Merrie England back in medieval times and the winner was to have the honor of choosing a Queen of Love and Beauty. The idea for holding it had been brought to Fort Myers several years before by Major James Evans from his native Virginia where similar events had been held in Colonial days by colonists from England.

Instead of jousting each other off their horses, the contestants tilted their lances at three rings suspended ten feet off the ground from horizontal bars. Each rider had three tries and if he was a good horseman and had a hawk-like eye and nerves of steel he could get nine rings. To add interest to the event, J. C. Jeffcott tapped his fount of Irish humor and dubbed each contestant: the Knight of the Lost Cause, the Knight of the White Plume, the Knight of the Lone Star, and so on.

"Twas a grand tournament and the crowd became most excited. After hours of competition, top honors were won by P. C. Gaines who straightway chose Miss Mamie Wilson as the Queen of Love and Beauty. She was crowned that night at a festival held at the home of Jehu J. Blount. Miss Susie Hendry was crowned as the First Maid of Honor and Miss Ella Blount as the Second Maid of Honor.

The tournament proved so successful that it was held each year thereafter until 1914 when World War I put a stop to such festivities.

Fort Myers was saddened late in 1885 by the death on December 3 of 63-year-old Editor Cleveland of the Fort Myers Press who had been suffering from Bright's Disease. The newspaper was continued by Mrs. Cleveland until March 13, 1886, when she sold it to Frank H. Stout, of Holton, Kansas, who was then working for the "Agriculturist" in DeLand. Details of the purchase were handled by his wife, Mrs. Olive E. Stout, who came to Fort Myers to see if the paper was worth buying. She bought it at first sight. Members of the Stout family were identified with the paper for twenty-seven years.

#### *Lee County Comes into Existence*

The Fort Myers "Academy," the town's one and only school, burned to the ground Wednesday, May 12, 1886. The fire was discovered late in the afternoon and before a bucket brigade could be formed the whole building was ablaze. No one knew how the fire started. Some people blamed boys who had become tired of going to school, now that warm weather had begun. Perhaps they were correct.

Fifty-nine pupils were affected by the calamity. None were heart-broken but their parents were deeply perturbed. They didn't like the thought of the youngsters running around footloose indefinitely, learning nothing. They insisted that another school be built before a new school term started in the fall.

To see what could be done, a delegation of citizens headed by Principal Dan C. Kantz and Capt. Peter Nelson, Fort Myers member of the board of public instruction of Monroe County, left immediately for Key West, the county seat. A week later the delegation returned—with bad news. County officials had told them emphatically that they had no money to build another school and wouldn't have for at least another year.

Captain Nelson reported that the county officials had been quite nasty and had intimated that since Fort Myers had been so careless as to permit a splendid \$1,000 building to be destroyed by fire it didn't deserve consideration.

The people of Fort Myers were incensed. This was the last straw. Monroe County had slighted them once too often. For several years there had been talk of trying to get Fort Myers region freed from the clutches of Monroe but nothing definite had been done. Now the time had come for action.

Fort Myers had many other reasons besides the school for wanting separation from the mother county. The worst grievance was that Key West was so far away that from a practical standpoint it was well-nigh inaccessible. To go there to attend court or transact business with county officials usually required a week or more and the expense was rarely less than \$50. The cost of summoning witnesses to court in civil actions often was prohibitive for small litigants. And for a person to go to Key West to appeal to the county commissioners for an adjustment in his taxes

was absurd. Even if he got the adjustment the cost of getting it would be more than the saving.

Besides all this the people of Fort Myers felt they were getting very little in return for all the tax money they were sending to Key West—no roads, no bridges, no public improvements of any kind. It was a case of everything going out and nothing coming back.

In a last minute attempt to appease the angry county-division advocates two of the county commissioners came to Fort Myers to see what could be done about the road situation. They found that it was bad—extremely bad. In fact, they found there were no roads whatever in the Fort Myers region—nothing but cattle trails and ox team paths which meandered through the woods and marshes and often were impassable during the rainy season. There was not one road on which any county money had been spent.

Admitting that the road situation was deplorable, the commissioners took steps to provide for two of the worst needs—bridges across Billy's Creek and Whiskey Creek. Ox and mule teams had bogged down at those crossings countless times and bridges were obviously essential. A contract for the bridges was awarded to Joseph Vivas who agreed to construct both for \$949. The Billy's Creek bridge was 223 feet long and the Whiskey Creek bridge 66 feet. Vivas said later he lost heavily on the job—and little wonder.

The last minute magnanimity of the commissioners did not silence the county-division clamor. The grievances were too deep-seated. The



*Photo Courtesy of Mrs. Harry Laycock*

Good roads did not exist in Lee County before the turn of the century and settlers in the back country had to travel in ox carts to reach Fort Myers and trips into "town" were long-looked-forward-to events. This photograph, taken in 1892, shows the teams of three pioneers who brought in their produce, bartered it at the Parker-Blount store, and were getting ready to start on their long journeys home.

separation movement continued steadily to gain momentum. Victory was not long delayed. The big cattlemen of Fort Myers—Capt. F. A. Hendry, Samuel Summerlin, T. E. Langford, William H. Towles, James E. Hendry, and others—had many staunch friends among Tallahassee politicians and they quickly got action in the state legislature. A bill creating Lee County was passed by the Senate on May 2, 1887, by the House a week later, and was signed immediately by the governor.

The new county of Lee, named by Capt. F. A. Hendry in honor of General Robert E. Lee, came into existence.

The first county officials were elected May 17. They were: J. W. Bain, clerk; Robert Cranford, judge; T. W. Langford, sheriff; I. S. Singletary, assessor; N. L. Langford, collector; James E. Hendry, treasurer; W. A. Roberts, surveyor; D. C. Kantz, superintendent of public instruction; Dr. L. C. Washburn, coroner, and the following as commissioners: Capt. F. A. Hendry and Wm. H. Towles, of Fort Myers; Frank J. Wilson, Orange River; Peter Nelson, Alva; and John Powell, New Prospect.

The new county commissioners started to operate the infant county on a most extravagant basis. They voted unanimously to employ the up-and-coming Peter O. Knight as county attorney at the munificent salary of \$200 a year. But their action aroused such a furore that they hastily changed their minds at their next meeting and voted three to two to struggle along without any paid attorney. Knight was so put out by their parsimony, 'tis said, that he packed his bags soon afterward and forsook Fort Myers, going to Tampa where he won fame and fortune. Many Fort Myers people never ceased regretting his departure.

Other Fort Myers citizens soon had more cause for regret. When the new county was formed a vote was required to determine whether the county should be wet or dry and an election was called for October 10, 1887. The W.C.T.U. waged a vigorous campaign, knocking at every door in town and exhorting one and all to remove temptation from the sinful drunks. When the votes were counted it was found that the drys had won, 117 to 67. The result was a crushing blow for the lads who liked their snifters now and then and enjoyed stopping at Taff Langford's Golden Palace to mingle with the other lads who snifted. But now those good old days were gone—for another two years anyhow. The town's two saloons were forced to close their doors.

That didn't mean, however, that Fort Myers became entirely dry. Not quite. Old Bill Clay, moonshiner extraordinary, soon moved back into town. He rented a small shack behind Nancy Allen's livery stable and on the door he hung the skin of a wild cat. Where the cat's eyes had been there were two round holes. That was Bill Clay's way of informing the community that Fort Myers' first Blind Tiger had been opened for business.

One of the county commissioners' first actions was to secure quarters for a temporary courthouse. The upper floor of the Towles & Hendry frame store building on the southwest corner of First and Jackson was

rented for \$250 a year and a building nearby for use as the clerk's office for \$120 a year.

Plans for a permanent courthouse were delayed until the electors of the new county were given an opportunity to state where they wanted the county seat located. Three communities campaigned for it—Fort Myers, of course, and Alva and Fort Denaud. When an election on the issue was finally held, on February 6, 1888, Fort Myers won hands down, getting 89 votes to Alva's 16 and Fort Denaud's 7.

Immediately after the election the county fathers, led by Captain Hendry and Bill Towles, began building up public support for a courthouse. They wanted an imposing structure, one which would be properly becoming for a county with a future, not some dinky little affair which would be a disgrace to the community. So they had plans drawn for a stately three-story building, to be made entirely of concrete—one which would be safe from fire.

To get money for the courthouse the commissioners decided that \$20,000 worth of bonds should be issued and to get approval from the voters an election was called for March 18, 1889—the first bond election in the county's history. The issue was approved, 100 to 47.

A site for the courthouse was purchased from Charles W. and Jane L. Hendry. It comprised about two acres and was located on the south side of the Hendry homestead, being bounded by what are now Main, Broadway, Second and Monroe streets. For this tract the county paid Mr. and Mrs. Hendry \$2,250 on September 4, 1889.

A contract for the building was let to Thompson & Green and by the fall of 1889 construction work was started. But, alas and alack, the county bonds could not be sold. Hard times were setting in up North and the money market was drying up.

By the time the commissioners learned that no one would take the infant county's bonds, Thompson & Green had spent approximately \$3,000 for labor and materials and to construct a wharf at the foot of Monroe Street where materials could be unloaded. The firm sued for \$3,500 and after long litigation the county settled for \$1,644.

Finally, on September 3, 1894, the commissioners awarded a contract for a frame courthouse to T. M. Park, the low bidder, for \$3,640.

This building, completed in December, 1894, was nothing like the stately structure Captain Hendry, Bill Towles and the others had hoped for five years before. But in 1894 few people regretted the forced economy. By that time they had much worse problems to bother them.

#### *Fort Myers Marks Time*

Improvements came slowly—but very slowly, during the decade following the incorporation of Fort Myers as a town.

When J. H. Edmonds built a wooden foot bridge across Manuel's Branch during the summer of 1885 Editor Cleveland declared that he

"deserves the thanks of the entire community for this badly needed public improvement."

In April, 1886, Editor Stout of the Press warmly praised William H. Towles and James E. Hendry for laying a shell sidewalk in front of their store at First and Jackson. "We sincerely hope," the editor wrote, "that other merchants in the business district follow their example. Our streets and sidewalks at present are a disgrace to the town."

Towles & Hendry were praised again by Editor Stout in June, 1887, when they put up the first street light, an oil-burning lamp. "The light shines forth like a beacon in the wilderness and is truly wonderful to behold," the editor rhapsodized. "It is a very good idea and one we hope to see followed by all our business men."

The town officials were unable to proceed with badly needed public improvements for the very good reason that they had no money in the town treasury. The only sources of revenue the town had were trifling occupational taxes and fines collected from lawbreakers. And since the town was quite law abiding and the number of business people few, the revenue from those sources were small indeed.

Some idea of what Fort Myers was like in 1887 can be obtained from the following directory published by the Press:

Mrs. Nancy Allen, livery stable; J. J. Blount & Co., merchants; Charles Braman, harness and shoe shop; Z. J. Brown, merchant; Bain & Evans, lumber; R. Cranford, notary public; J. L. Cutler, mangrove tannery; Thomas A. Edison, laboratory; Edward L. Evans, merchant and postmaster; Taylor Frierson, hotel proprietor; W. P. Gardner, nurseryman; P. C. Gaines, cigar factory; H. Glover, billiard room; Henry Hoyer, druggist; James E. Hendry, merchant; Francis M. Hendry, real estate agent; Louis A. Hendry, contractor; Henderson & Henderson, merchants; J. T. Haskew, general repairing shop; D. O. Hickey & Son, merchants; John B. Hickey, butcher; H. M. Higginbotham, jeweler; Peter O. Knight, attorney; Dr. James Kellum, physician; Loper & Langford, merchants; Mills & Wheeler, saw mill; J. J. Pike, butcher; W. A. Roberts, real estate agent; South Florida Tropical Fruit Co., William Hanson, manager; Frank H. Stout, publisher and editor, Fort Myers Press; Mrs. S. E. Titus, hotel; Towles & Hendry, lumber; Joseph Vivas, contractor; L. C. Washburn, physician; W. R. Washburn, barber and stationery; Capt. W. M. White, Str. "Alice Howard."

That directory of business and professional people looked more imposing than it actually was. Several of the merchants listed had only hole-in-the-wall establishments and did very little business. Gaines' "cigar factory" had only two employees and was doomed to pass out of existence in a few months. The town's lone attorney, Peter O. Knight, left town that fall and went to Tampa. The South Florida Tropical Fruit Co., organized to promote the growing of guavas, existed only on paper. Thomas A. Edison's laboratory was closed in May, 1887, and did not reopen until 1901.

The town's only industry, aside from the cigar factory and newspaper printing plant, was Cutler's "mangrove tannery." In his establishment, which had three employes, alligator hides were tanned and made into leather for suitcases, pocketbooks, and belts. Also, deer skins and otter pelts were prepared for market. It was a small business but it held promise.

Here's a list of the "exports" from the Fort Myers district in 1887: cattle, \$180,000; sugar and molasses, \$50,000; fish scales, shells, deer skins, alligator, otter, bear, panther, snake, beaver and other skins, \$15,000, and bird plumes and taxidermist specimens, \$25,000.

That list of exports is illuminating, just as much for what it doesn't show as what it does. For instance, it shows that the only products then being shipped in any quantity by farmers were sugar and molasses obtained from their patches of sugar cane. They were not shipping enough pineapples, fresh vegetables or even citrus fruit to have those products listed. The reason, of course, was a lack of transportation adequate for handling perishable products and also a lack of good markets.

The extent of the trading then being done with the Indians is shown by the fact that the things they brought in constituted almost all of \$40,000 worth of the exports. That was particularly true of the alligator hides and animal pelts. They also brought in many of the bird skins and plumes. However, the most "successful" plume hunters were white men—the Indians were not as ruthless as the whites were in slaughtering hundreds of thousands of birds each year to get egret and other plumes for the adornment of milady's bonnet. The Audubon Society finally put those fellows out of business—after practically all the plumage birds were killed.



*Photo Courtesy of Eleanor H. D. Pearce*

In the days before good roads and trucks, fruit and vegetables were brought from the Orange River district by the tiny steamboat "Anah C." owned by the Menge Brothers Steamboat Line.

The export list shows that the total of all products shipped out of the Fort Myers district annually amounted to \$270,000. And it must be remembered that those were newspaper ballyhoo figures, published to show the "prosperity" of the region. Quite obviously the estimates were not too low.

The fact that all the exports amounted to only a quarter million dollars or so explains why more public improvements were not made by the town or county during the late 1880's. No roads were improved and only one public building was erected—a one-story, two-room school house to replace the one burned on May 12, 1886. It was started immediately after the county was created in May 1887, and completed in time for the opening of the school term in September. It cost \$700 and was erected on the same site as the old academy, at Second and Jackson. The school was the only one in the entire county; soon afterward, however, a small school was opened at Alva, the building and site being donated by Capt. Peter Nelson. School board members then were J. A. Castell, T. T. Eyre, Dr. John Hall, and L. P. Gardner, with D. C. Kantz as county superintendent.

#### *Fort Myers Suffers Reverses*

The city of Key West was hard hit by an epidemic of yellow fever in May, 1887. Hundreds of persons were stricken by the dread disease and many died. Included among the victims were four former residents of Fort Myers who had gone to Key West to live: Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Baker, E. Diedrick, and 21-year-old William H. Jameson.

Jameson was taken sick June 5 and died three days later. Word of his death was received in Fort Myers with sorrow. He had come to Fort Myers with Stafford S. Cleveland to work in the job printing plant of the Press and had served as assistant editor of the paper. Everyone in town knew and liked him and had hoped he would return again.

As the Key West epidemic increased in severity, all South Florida became alarmed. Vessels from the Florida keys were ordered into quarantine and every precaution was taken to prevent the disease from spreading to the mainland.

In Fort Myers, Acting Mayor W. P. Gardner issued a message of reassurance. "Yellow Jack is a disease that feeds on and revels in filth," he declared, "and since our town is noted for cleanliness and perfect drainage, the scourge cannot find a lodgement here. Our quarantine regulations are strict and are being rigidly enforced and we think we have no reason to fear. Keep a brave heart, live frugally, and guard your person and premises, and all will be well."

By July the epidemic became so bad that a more rigid quarantine was established and Thomas W. Langford was appointed special policeman and health inspector at Punta Rassa with powers granted by the state health authorities to arrest any persons who tried to land from ships from Key West. In Fort Myers a "shotgun guard" was set up to patrol all trails entering the town to keep out plague refugees.

Fort Myers became so subdued that there was no July 4th celebration.

The quarantine was kept in effect all summer and on October 9 it was broadened to bar all ships from Tampa as well as from Key West. In Tampa, however, the disease did not reach epidemic form and the quarantine against that city was soon lifted. By the end of the month the Key West epidemic ended and all quarantine regulations were removed on November 4.

There is little doubt but that the prevalence of yellow fever in Key West and its reported presence in several places on the mainland had a temporary effect upon the development of South Florida. Many northerners who had a deadly fear of the disease changed their plans for coming to the state that winter; some persons said that was what kept Thomas Edison away.

Yellow fever did not affect Fort Myers nearly so badly, however, as the collapse of Hamilton Disston's grandiose plans for draining the Everglades and converting them into huge sugar cane plantations.

The collapse of the drainage scheme was not expected. As late as January, 1885, the governor reported that operations were coming along remarkably well and went on to say: "The magnitude of this enterprise and its destined influence upon the future of the state can scarcely be realized. The reclamation of many millions of acres, containing some of the most vital sugar lands in the United States with suitable climatic conditions for the successful growth of all tropical fruits, is the harbinger of an era of population, wealth and prosperity unthought of in our past history."

Steamer service between Fort Myers and Kissimmee was started on June 5, 1885, by the "Narcoosee" with Capt. Thomas A. Bass in command. Fort Myers rejoiced. At long last the inland waterway was open for navigation, clear through Lake Okeechobee and far up the Kissimmee River to Kissimmee City. Soon this waterway would be swarming with boats, heavily laden with produce raised in the fertile Glades and Kissimmee Valley. And in a few short years a waterway clear across the state would be opened, connecting the Gulf with the Atlantic! That was what everyone confidently believed in 1885.

Captain Bass reported that the route to Kissimmee was entirely practical and that the only trouble he encountered was when projecting branches of trees shattered the railing of his upper deck at a narrow point in the Caloosahatchee. He said the trip between the two towns took only four days and he predicted he would make two round trips a month.

But he didn't. He returned to Fort Myers only once that summer and early in September word came from Kissimmee that the service would be discontinued, due to the fact that Captain Bass was not getting cargoes large enough to pay operating expenses. On December 2 the service was resumed by the steamer "Rosalie" with Mike Grogan in

command. But he too was forced to give up—he couldn't make enough to pay his deck hands.

Fort Myers suffered another blow when a report came stating that Disston's sugar cane experiments in the Glades near the Hicpochee Canal were turning out badly. His one canal to the Gulf was not draining the mucklands as expected and the sugar cane was rotting in the ground. Very obviously the drainage project, to be successful, would cost far more than anyone had ever figured.

Disston soon showed that he had no intention of sinking much more money in the reclamation scheme. He gave orders for the dredging operations to be curtailed and in 1888 he ordered them stopped entirely. The dredge Captain Menge had been using was left far out in the Glades, to be consumed in time by rust.

Official records indicate that Disston's company, the Atlantic and Gulf Coast Canal and Okeechobee Land Company, spent approximately \$300,000 on the drainage projects. It did not succeed in permanently draining one acre of Glades land. Consequently it was not entitled to receive one acre of the public domain as a reward for its labors. But the records show that Disston and his associates actually received nearly 2,000,000 acres in the Everglades as their reward. They had political influence.

But Disston did not live to profit through the land deals. He died suddenly on April 30, 1896, and his properties passed into other hands.

### *Punta Gorda Gets the Railroad*

Perchance there is a town somewhere in Florida which reveres the memory of Henry B. Plant, railroad tycoon of bygone years. But the memory of Henry B. Plant most certainly is not revered in Fort Myers. For back in 1887 Henry B. Plant did Fort Myers dirt.

Instead of extending his Florida Southern Railroad south to the Calooshatchee, as the people of the village hoped and prayed he would, Plant forgot that Fort Myers existed and extended his road to an empty space on the map at Charlotte Harbor, thereby bringing into existence the town of Punta Gorda.

Fort Myers was wronged, most grievously, and it never forgot Plant's heinous deed. Neither did it forgive him.

To appreciate Fort Myers' yearning for a railroad back in the late 1880's it is necessary to review a bit of transportation history.

From its earliest days Fort Myers depended upon sloops and small schooners to bring in the supplies it needed to carry out the products it had to sell. Large ships could not come up the Caloosahatchee because the channel was originally only five feet deep in many places and even less when the tide was very low. The federal government in 1883 deepened the channel to eight feet but that didn't help much.

Travelers faced a hard journey when they wanted to go North. Their best bet was to take a sloop down the river to Punta Rassa and go from there by schooner or steamer to Key West and then proceed northward on the Mallory Line. Or, if they preferred, they could go by schooner up to Manatee or Tampa, make connections with a mail boat bound for Cedar Keys and at that point take the railroad to Fernandina.

Going by either route was a real adventure. Miss Fannie Moore found this out when she came to Fort Myers from New York in 1884 to teach school. She said the trip seemed endless. Arriving at Fernandina on a steamer, she learned she had just missed the train and had to stay overnight in a bedbug, roach-ridden hotel where she was not able to sleep a wink. Next day, on the way to Cedar Keys, the rickety, wood-burning engine broke down and the passengers had to sleep in the railroad coach. At Cedar Keys she learned she would have to wait two days for a steamer headed south and her hotel was even worse than the one in Fernandina. In Manatee she had another two-day layover. The journey to Punta Rassa took fourteen more hours and at Punta Rassa she had to wait five hours for a sloop up the river. Miss Moore finally arrived in Fort Myers eleven days after she left New York, very much the worse for wear.

Capt. John L. Bright, owner of the sloop "Margaretta," provided Fort Myers with its first regular transportation. He was awarded a contract by the Post Office Department in 1876 to carry the mail and he made two trips a week between Fort Myers and Fort Ogden, picking up the mail at Punta Rassa. He left Fort Myers on Wednesdays and Saturdays and Fort Ogden on Mondays and Thursdays. A full day was required to make the trip and often, when the winds were against him, he had to anchor somewhere over night. But he boasted that he had "the best appointed and fastest sloop on the Coast with the finest accommodations for passengers."

Fort Myers suffered a serious loss, from a transportation standpoint, in September, 1878. The rains that summer had been unusually heavy. Lake Okeechobee became full and running over. Then came a strong northeast wind which drove the water to the southwest side of the lake and forced it down the Caloosahatchee. More rains fell—torrential



Phoenix Hall built in 1890, where all community meetings were held for two decades—political rallies, socials, lodge meetings, and even plays. Ed. L. Evans had his general store on lower floor.

downpours. The whole valley became flooded. As a climax, a storm of hurricane velocity blew in from the southwest, piling the water from the Gulf into the river. Almost all of Fort Myers was under water. A large two-masted schooner was stranded at First and Hendry streets. Severe damage was done all along the waterfront. The worst was the destruction of the long wharf built by the Army in 1852. All of the planking and many of the pilings were washed away by the high waters.

The wharf was the only good one on the waterfront and all the larger schooners docked there. Without it, goods would have to be lightered to shore. Confronted by the emergency, every able-bodied man in town lent a hand and a new wharf, not as long as the old one, was constructed at the foot of Hendry Street. It was the first public improvement project in the history of the community.

In 1885, after Fort Myers was incorporated, the town council gave the firm of Towles & Hendry the right to build a wharf at the foot of Jackson Street which they could use for ten years. Joseph Vivas got the contract to build it, for \$1,200. He used 30,000 feet of lumber which he brought in from Cedar Keys.

Because of a railroad war, Fort Myers got its first steamship service. Plant took his railroad into Tampa in 1884 and began making strenuous efforts to capture all the business in South Florida. This aroused the ire of officials of the Florida Railway & Navigation Company which owned the Fernandina-Cedar Keys railroad. They had held a monopoly on all South Florida business for years and did not want to lose it.

In an attempt to thwart Plant, they bought the steamer "Manatee" and placed it in operation on a regular weekly run along the lower coast to and from Manatee where connections for Cedar Keys were made with the steamer "Gov. Safford." The first trip south from Manatee was made June 3, 1885, with Capt. W. H. Stanton in command of the steamer. On the journey south stops were made at Hickory Bluff, Cleveland, Liverpool, Pine Level, Fort Ogden, Punta Rassa and Fort Myers. On the return trip the "Manatee" left Fort Myers on Friday, June 5.

To celebrate the new steamship service in proper style the people of Fort Myers prevailed upon Captain Stanton to run an excursion up the river on the following Thursday. More than a hundred persons made the trip. Editor Cleveland reported that the journey was "extremely interesting" and that all along the way "alligators lay with their noses above the water as if they had no fear of anyone."

Unfortunately for Fort Myers, Plant and the FR & N ended their railroad war the following winter and on March 12, 1886, the "Manatee" was withdrawn from the run down the coast. During the same month the steamer "Rosalie" stopped making its frequent trips to Kissimmee City. It was a double blow for Fort Myers.

But the town was not long without transportation. In the late winter Plant had started extending his Florida Southern south from Bartow and by April the tracks had been laid to Arcadia. To get business for

the railroad from the lower coast Plant put the steamer "Alice Howard" on the run from Fort Myers to Liverpool, an infinitesimal settlement on the Peace River above Charlotte Harbor. At Liverpool, a hack connection was made with the railroad. Three trips were made each week from Fort Myers.

The "Alice Howard" soon had competition. Capt. A. P. Williams decided he wanted some of the railroad business so he brought in the tiny steamer "Chimo" and started making bi-weekly runs to Fort Ogden. His boat was smaller than the "Alice Howard" and hence could go farther up the river than Liverpool.

At the same time the schooners "New Venice" and "Clara E. M." began making regular weekly runs to Tampa. For once Fort Myers had all the water transportation it needed.

But what Fort Myers really wanted, and needed, was a railroad to carry its products directly to the markets of the North. When ships had to be used as well as railroads the expense of shipping became almost prohibitive and farmers could not compete with those who had only railroad rates to pay.

Every effort was made, therefore, to persuade Plant to extend his road to the Caloosahatchee. Delegation after delegation went from Fort Myers to talk to high officials of his railroad. But the results were nil. Plant wanted the railroad built to Charlotte Harbor, and that is where he built it. The town of Punta Gorda was born and with it the splendid, 200-room Plant System Hotel, one of the finest on the West Coast, a hotel which Plant advertised throughout the land. Trains started running into Punta Gorda in April, 1887, and that new town soon became the lower West Coast shipping center.

If Plant would have made Fort Myers the terminal of his road, then Fort Myers undoubtedly would have gained the population, and the tourist business, which went Punta Gorda's way. But Fort Myers was shunned and Punta Gorda stole the limelight. For Fort Myers, that was a tragedy. Its growth almost stopped.

Then came the dread panic of 1893. Business throughout the nation stagnated. Factories closed their doors. Poverty and despair spread everywhere.

Fort Myers was hard hit. The price of cattle dropped to the lowest level in the history of Florida. Shipments stopped almost entirely. And there was no market for farm products, or even alligator hides, animal pelts, or bird plumes. Merchants suffered badly.

To make matters even worse, a pebble phosphate company in which a number of leading Fort Myers men had invested heavily, went bankrupt. Jehu Blount, Howell A. Parker, Marion Hendry and others lost almost everything they had. Fort Myers became a dreary, despondent place.

Then, when everything looked darkest, Mother Nature took a hand.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BIG FREEZE HURTS -- AND HELPS!

A GROUP OF GLOOMY, disconsolate men sat huddled around the pot bellied stove in Bob Henderson's general store at First and Jackson, bemoaning a disaster which had occurred the night before. Dennis Hickey, truck farmer from up the river, took a pine knot out of the wood box and put it in the already roaring stove.

"Never did see it so danged cold," he muttered. "Here it's two in the afternoon and it's still almost freezing. I'm chilled clean through. Good thing Bob got this stove out. If he hadn't we'd have all frozen."

The others nodded glumly. Then the conversation switched back to recounts of the damage done the preceding night by a devastating frost. They all made the same report—truck crops were ruined, completely wiped out. Tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, cabbage—everything that had been planted for the winter markets, had been killed. The plants now were as black as though they had been in the path of a searing fire.

That was on Sunday, December 29, 1894. Because of the calamity, Robert A. Henderson had opened his store, not for business but to serve as a meeting place for the victims of the frost.

"We've never had anything like it," declared John Powell. "I've lived here since '67 and I guess I know what I'm talking about. We had a pretty bad frost in '86 but it wasn't anything like this. This morning there was an inch of ice in a water bucket out at my pump. Yes sir, an inch of ice."

It was the coldest weather Fort Myers had ever had. A chilly rain had fallen on the preceding Thursday and Friday. On Friday night, the skies cleared and the wind shifted to the north. By Saturday the air was biting and at 9 o'clock that night the mercury had dropped to 42. All during the night it kept getting colder and by 6 a.m. Sunday morning the thermometers registered 24, four degrees colder than on January 12, 1886, the day of the last bad frost.

The Big Freeze of December 29, 1894, as it was always called in later years, was a catastrophe for the truck farmers of the Caloosahatchee region. But, strangely enough, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise for the community, the best bit of good fortune it had ever had.

Truck crops were ruined, true enough, but that was a trifling, niggling damage compared to what was done by the Big Freeze elsewhere in the state.

In the great citrus belt in the north central counties of the peninsula, temperatures as low as 10 degrees were recorded. Thousands of acres of

trees were killed outright or most seriously damaged. The loss to grove owners was appalling.

But in the Caloosahatchee region citrus trees escaped practically unharmed. The leaves of some trees were nipped by the frost but the crop of fruit was not damaged—the below-freezing temperature had not continued long enough to do serious harm.

The extreme cold spell was followed by six weeks of unusually warm weather. In the central part of the state many trees on which only the fruit and twigs had been frozen began to show new life. But then another, longer freeze occurred, in the early morning of February 9, 1895. As far south as Manatee the mercury plunged to 18. A little farther north the temperature dropped to 14 and even lower. Hundreds of groves were completely destroyed. Florida suffered a crippling, paralyzing blow.

But again the groves in the Caloosahatchee area escaped. In fact, the frost was not as bad as on December 29. A last-minute shift of the wind kept the temperature from dropping below 28. Not one citrus tree was harmed.

The frost damage elsewhere in the state was so universal and so disastrous that few persons believed reports that the Fort Myers area had escaped. Upstate newspapers began sending telegrams to Editor Stout of the Press protesting against the no-damage "propaganda," as they called it. They said they wanted to know the truth.

James E. Hendry, Jr., then attending college in Leesburg, received a box of oranges from his father and had a hard job convincing his classmates that the fruit had not been shipped in from Cuba.

Finally, however, the reports of Fort Myers' good fortune were accepted as being true and fruit buyers began rushing to the Caloosahatchee region to purchase every orange and grapefruit they could get. They paid fantastic prices, more than had ever before been paid anywhere in Florida, \$5 to \$6 a crate for oranges and \$10 to \$15 for grapefruit. Edward Parkinson, at Alva, received \$1,500 cash for the fruit from 35 grapefruit trees in his small grove. Many persons obtained \$100 to \$200 for the fruit from a single tree. Citrus trees that winter truly yielded a golden harvest.

The high prices paid were as unexpected as they were welcomed. Prior to the Big Freeze, few grove owners in the Caloosahatchee area could market fruit at a profit, due to the lower shipping rates enjoyed by their upstate competitors. Most of the fruit that was shipped out went by boat in bulk lots to Mobile, Ala., and often did not bring more than enough to pay the transportation charges. Consequently, many growers let their fruit rot on the ground and neglected their trees, not finding it profitable to go to the expense of fertilizing and spraying them. And few new groves were planted. In all of Lee County there were not more than a hundred acres of bearing trees. The annual output of fruit was less than 15,000 boxes.

But all this was changed by the Big Freeze.

Growers who had been wiped out in the citrus sections farther north began coming in. They wanted to replant their groves but not in places where the frost menace was so great. So they came to the Caloosahatchee area.

One of the first to arrive was J. B. King, of Orlando, whose grove of 4,000 trees in Orange County had been almost entirely destroyed. He purchased the A. A. Gardner grove of 1,700 young trees at Alva. King was soon followed by J. B. and D. S. Borland, A. S. Kells, Henry G. Dunn, J. B. Wright, E. L. Wartmann, C. B. Kells, E. G. Blake, Harry Scott and many others. They all planted groves, totaling hundreds of acres. Within a year after the Big Freeze more than \$200,000 of "outside money" was invested in land and groves by growers from sections which had been frozen out.

Citrus properties increased rapidly in value. In April, 1895, Louis Locklar sold his grove at Hickey's Creek to Mace & Block for \$6,000. During the next three years the buyers cleared \$10,000 from the sale of fruit and then sold the grove to W. F. Harris, of South Orange, N. J., for \$15,000. At that time the grove was producing 2,500 boxes a year and was considered an excellent bargain.

Because of the banner prices paid for fruit after the Big Freeze more attention was given to existing groves in 1895-96 than had been given for years. They were pruned carefully, sprayed regularly and fertilized heavily. As a result, new life was given to old trees which looked about ready to die and younger trees came more quickly into bearing. Moreover, the fruit was picked when ripe and not left on the trees until it fell to the ground and rotted.

The growers received big dividends for their extra work. The groves yielded a record crop during the winter of 1895-96 and a still larger crop the winter following. Shipments climbed from 15,000 crates in 1894-95 to 40,000 in 1895-96 and to 72,000 in 1896-97. Thereafter, as more and more groves came into bearing, the shipments continued to increase. Despite the greater production, prices remained high, simply because Lee County had almost a monopoly on the citrus business until well after the turn of the century.

During the last five years of the nineteenth century, many nationally known men came to the Land of the Caloosahatchee, partly because of the Big Freeze and partly because of one of the most unique hostelries which ever opened its doors to guests anywhere in the United States—the Tarpon House at Punta Rassa.

#### *Millionaires in Murderers' Row*

George Renton Shultz was a short, walrus-moustached man with a merry twinkle in his eye, a rotund lover of good things to eat, and a jolly fellow who liked nothing better than to talk to friends.

Shultz was the telegraph operator from New Jersey who was sent to Punta Rassa in 1867 by the International Ocean Cable Company to

take charge of its relay station. But it was not as a cable station manager that Shultz was known best—he became famed throughout the land as the genial host of Punta Rassa's Tarpon House.

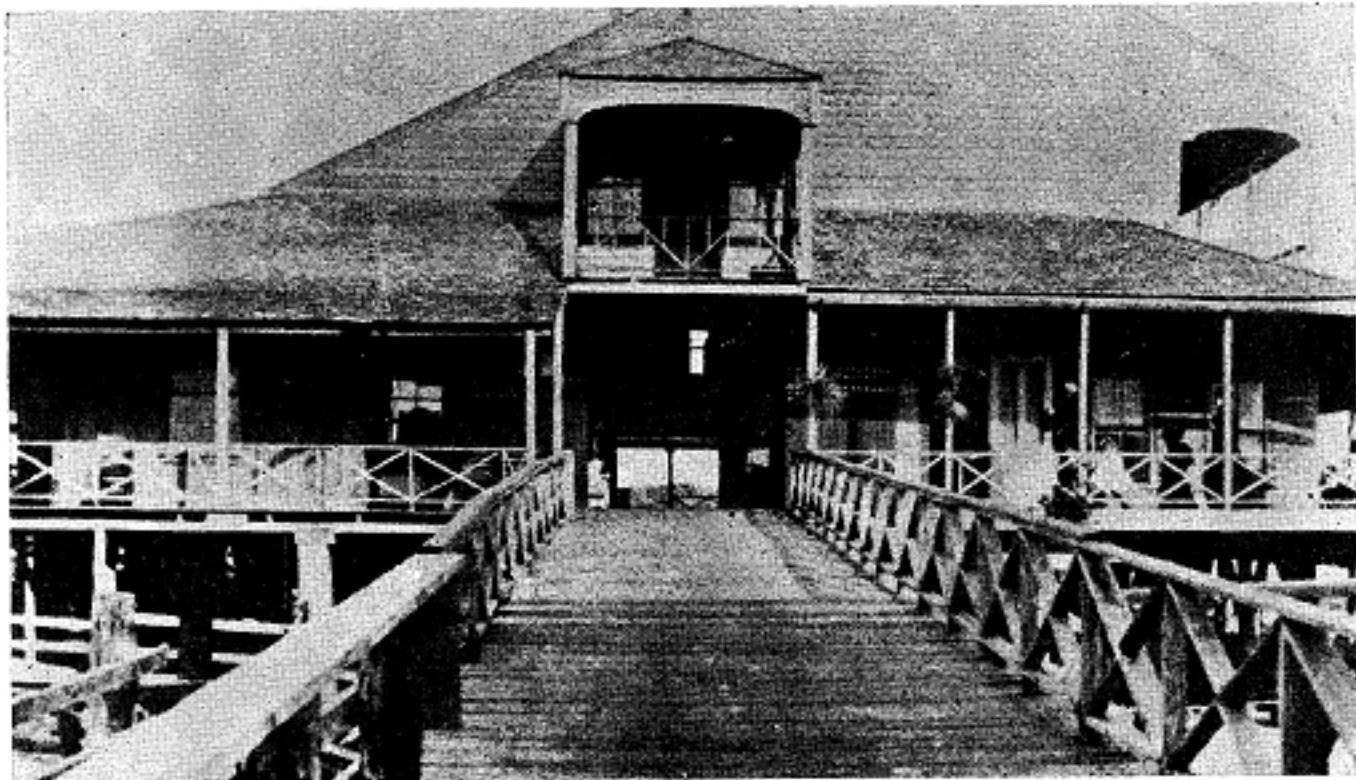
This hostelry, if it could be called that, was located in the old army barracks which had been taken over by the cable company for its Punta Rassa station. A ramshackle building, it was built on fourteen-foot pilings to be safe from hurricane waters. The huge frame structure was unpainted and looked like an abandoned barn.

When Shultz first came to Punta Rassa he had no intention of converting the barracks into a hotel. But cattlemen who came to the point to ship cattle to Key West and Cuba persuaded him to take them in—they could not possibly sleep in the open in that mosquito-ridden spot. So Shultz let them bed down on the barracks floor or hang their hammocks between the rafters.

Mr. and Mrs. Shultz also provided lodging and meals to travelers going to or coming from Fort Myers, Punta Rassa being the place where connections were made between the river sloops and ships which went up and down the coast.

During the 1880's the Shultzes began getting a different type of guest—sportsmen who found that the nearby waters provided a super-perfect fishermen's paradise. They came to catch kingfish, channel bass, sea trout, Spanish mackerel, king fish—and most important of all, the mighty Silver King, the tarpon.

One of the first angler guests was Walt McDougald, famous writer and cartoonist of bygone days. With a party of friends he was cruising



*Photo Courtesy of Eleanor H. D. Pearse*

This barn-like structure, built by the Army at Punta Rassa as a barracks during the Civil War, became nationally famous when converted into the Tarpon House, operated for years by George R. Shultz.

along the coast on a fishing trip early in March, 1881, when a storm blew up. Seeking shelter, he tied up at Shultz wharf and Mr. and Mrs. Shultz invited the men in to spend the night. They also furnished them with meals.

The meals and the lodging place were so unique that McDougald told all his friends about them when he returned north. Some of them went to Punta Rassa the following winter to see if such an interesting place existed. They found that it did—and the fame of Shultz's place began to spread.

Nationally known business men, industrialists, bankers, merchants, politicians and titled foreigners began making it their winter rendezvous. The crude accommodations, the barren floors, the tin wash bowls, and the china slop jars were so unlike the things they were accustomed to that they were looked upon as quaintly odd, and attractive. So the celebrities returned, year after year. Favored guests were given rooms which opened out onto a gallery built on the side of the building. These rooms, eleven in number, were known as "Murderers' Row." Less important guests, or newcomers,<sup>\*</sup> occupied rooms facing a wind-swept corridor.

Most of the guests were wealthy and they kept in touch with the stock markets through the telegraph office operated by Shultz. It was a common sight to see a man in overalls and jumper, and shod in canvas shoes, go to the telegraph office and send an order to his New York broker to buy or sell thousands of shares of stock. Then he'd go back to his cronies and bet someone fifty cents or fifty dollars he'd catch the biggest fish that day.

The first tarpon ever caught anywhere with a rod and reel was brought in by one of the guests of the Shultz Hotel. He was W. H. Wood, a New York sportsman. The feat was performed on March 12, 1885, and attracted the attention of the entire sporting world. Illustrated articles about it were carried in many of the leading magazines of the day.

Wood caught his tarpon with a gearless reel made of rubber and white metal, 5 1/8 inches in diameter and 2 3/16 inches wide in the clear, holding 1,200 feet of 21-thread line. A five-foot bamboo rod and a gaff hook mounted on an ash hoe handle formed the rest of his equipment. The hooks were large cod "o," baited with mullet tied on with wire. The tackle was crude—but it worked. Wood caught his first tarpon in 26 1/2 minutes after it had leaped six times and run half a mile. It was 5 feet 9 inches long and weighed 93 pounds. The largest tarpon he caught that season weighed 117 pounds.

Prior to Wood's performance, tarpon had always been caught, when they were caught at all, with a shark hook and chain line or by harpooning, and anglers thought it was impossible to catch one with rod and reel. After Wood proved that it could be done, tarpon fishing leaped into popularity and hundreds of anglers came to the West Coast each season

to test their skill. Many stopped at Shultz's place, so many that he gave it the name of the Tarpon House.

After the railroad came into Punta Gorda in 1887 and ice became obtainable, the meals at the Tarpon House showed a marked improvement, in the variety of foods served if not in quality or tastiness. Mrs. Shultz even employed a French cook, with several assistants, to make sure that her guests would get the best obtainable.

The Tarpon House was the lure which attracted scores of celebrities to the Caloosahatchee region for the first time and many of them sailed up the river to Fort Myers to see what the town was like. After getting there, some of the visitors liked the place so well that they remained to help make it the city it is today.

#### *An Oil Baron Visits Fort Myers*

Ambrose M. McGregor liked to fish, and so did his wife, Tootie McGregor. They had a son, Bradford, who suffered from a chronic illness. Their physician told them they should take their son to Florida for the winter.

Because of the combination of their sick son and their passion for fishing, the McGregors went to the Tarpon House in the early winter of 1891-92. In February they sailed up to Fort Myers for the first time and found it so much to their liking that they decided to make it their winter home.

Inquiring around for a suitable residence, McGregor was shown the Gilliland home on the Edison estate. Business activities had kept Gilliland away from Fort Myers and he was willing to sell. The deal for the property, which included the house and about half the land at Seminole Lodge, was closed July 7, 1892. McGregor paid \$4,000.

The McGregor family moved into their new home the following December and made many improvements. They were living there at the time of the Big Freeze and when upstate fruit buyers and frozen-out grove owners began flocking in and talking of the bright prospects for citrus growing in the Caloosahatchee area.

McGregor, a thrifty Scotsman from Kings County, New York, was interested. The possibilities for making profitable investments here in this land of sunshine appealed to him. He soon began buying large tracts of land suitable for citrus growing and started planting large groves. Forseeing future growth for Fort Myers, he also bought many properties in town. Courthouse records show that he made thirty-two purchases during the next few years. He invested more than \$150,000.

For his son, McGregor purchased 400 acres just west of Alva and planted 100 acres in orange and grapefruit trees. On this tract, which he called Caloosa, he experimented in raising rice and coffee.

Both these experiments proved expensive and unsuccessful but McGregor could well afford to take the loss. He had been associated with John D. Rockefeller for many years and had become one of the largest stockholders of the Standard Oil Company, owning 30,000 shares valued at \$16,000,000. His annual income from the stock was reported to be \$1,140,000. He had many other holdings and was reported to be one of the ten richest men in the nation.

McGregor died in Cleveland on October 28, 1900, when only 58 years old. His son Bradford died two years later, on September 8, 1902.

But the McGregor influence continued to be felt in Fort Myers for many years thereafter and it is felt today, partly because of the activities of his widow and partly because of the enterprise of a hustling young fellow whom he aided in getting a start in life, Harvie Earnhardt Heitman, one of the most energetic men who ever came to Fort Myers.

### *The Beginning of the Heitman Era*

Harvie Heitman was a serious person, not given much to frivolities. His business judgment was as keen as his almost-black eyes. His broad firm mouth and his heavy chin were facial indications that he possessed the drive and determination to make a success in life. He was not a jovial man but a man who was widely respected, trusted, admired and liked. He had all the qualities needed for becoming one of Fort Myers' most outstanding leaders.

Born in Lexington, N. C., Heitman came to Fort Myers when sixteen years old to work in the general store of his great uncle, Howell A. Parker. From him he learned all the intricacies of operating a business in a small, frontier cow town.

During the panic of 1893 Parker went bankrupt after losing his entire fortune in a company organized to mine pebble phosphate near Olga. Left without a job, Heitman went to Key West and worked there for nearly a year. He then returned to Fort Myers and opened a small general store in a little frame building on the northwest corner of First and Jackson.

Instead of limiting his stock to the general run of goods carried by the other stores, Heitman laid in a large stock of marine supplies wanted by the wealthy yachtsmen then coming up the river to fish and hunt. They began going to Heitman's for everything they needed.

The young entrepreneur did not limit his activities to operating the general store. He soon branched out into many fields. Deciding that the town needed a much better livery stable than it had, he told Contractor T. M. Park to go ahead and build "the best barn in the whole state." When finished, the livery stable wasn't quite that good but it was well constructed and had sixteen stalls.

Heitman then brought into town the first Kentucky thoroughbreds which he sold for saddle and harness use. He advertised: "Single or

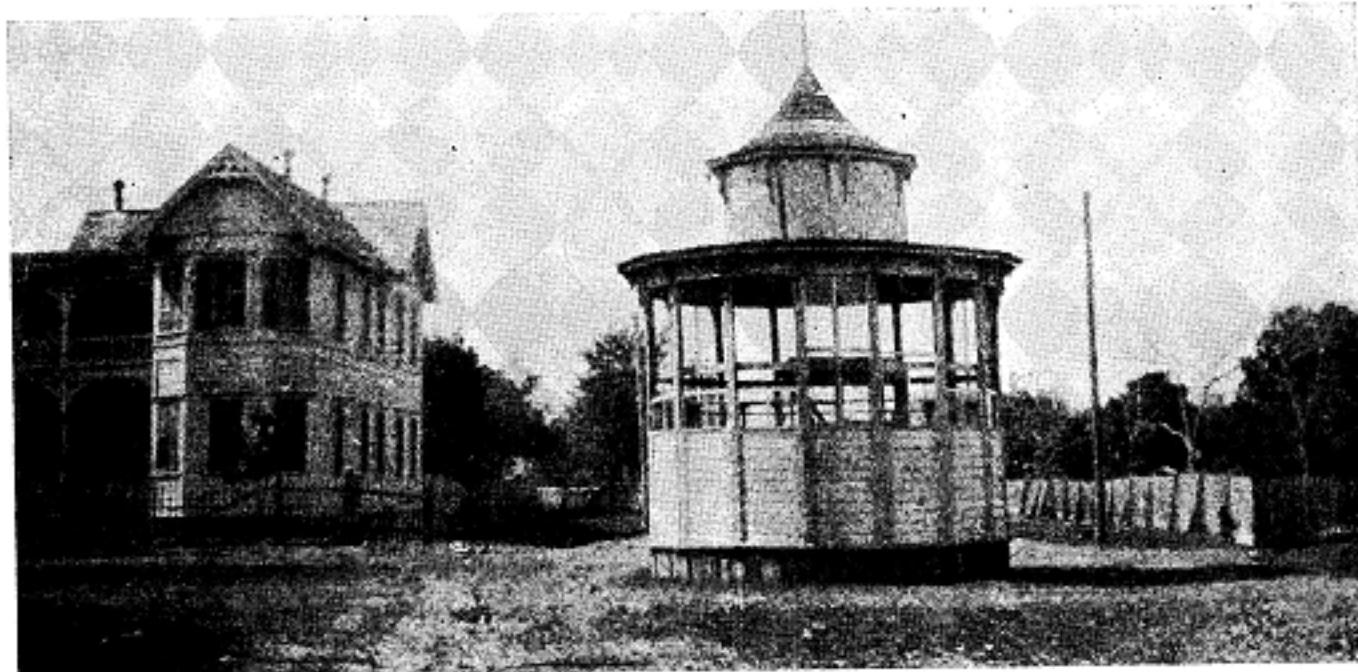
double drivers, saddle horses, buggies and carriages. Hauling of all kinds done. Good camping outfits and saddle ponies for hunting parties a specialty."

On February 20, 1896, Heitman started running a hack line to Naples where a hotel had been built a short time before by Col. W. N. Haldeman, publisher of the Louisville Courier-Journal, who was planning the development of an exclusive colony for wealthy people. Heitman's hack made three round trips to Naples each week and charged \$2.50 each way. In his advertisements he stated that "the 40-mile drive is made in a few hours and is a beautiful drive through the pines where the red deer wander."

Heitman's business zeal attracted the attention of McGregor, and the two men, "the serious Heitman and the equally serious Scotsman," soon became good friends. The oil baron instinctively felt that here was a young fellow who possessed the same qualities of grit and determination which he himself possessed in his younger days, and he decided to lend him a hand in his struggle to get ahead.

One day in the spring of 1897 McGregor asked Heitman why he didn't build a larger building for his rapidly growing business. When Heitman said he didn't have the money, the oil man offered to help him in financing the project. With the aid thus provided, Heitman proceeded to build the first brick building in Fort Myers, a two-story structure on the site of his first store at First and Jackson. The building, still standing in 1948, was completed February 17, 1898.

During that same winter another building was constructed which became in time the leading tourist attraction of Fort Myers and had an all-important bearing on the development of the town—the Fort Myers Hotel, later known as the Royal Palm.



*Photo Courtesy of Eleanor H. D. Pearse*

Back in the Gay Nineties members of the Fort Myers Brass Band dispensed wondrous music from this bandstand erected by their admirers at the intersection of Second and Lee. Weekly concerts were given there for many years.

*An Irishman Builds a Tourist Hotel*

Hugh O'Neill was a tall, sturdily built, blue-eyed Irishman, with iron grey hair and beard. Good natured and light hearted, he liked nothing better than to go fishing with friends.

He was one of the leading merchant princes of the nation, being the owner of H. O'Neill & Co., a New York department store which occupied an entire block on Sixth Avenue and employed 1,800 persons.

Born near Belfast, Ireland, on July 15, 1844, O'Neill went to New York with his parents when he was fourteen years old. He attended Old Grove School at night and during the days worked for his brother Henry who had founded a dry goods and notions business a few years before. In 1867 he became a partner in the concern and twelve years later bought out his brother and continued the business under the same name, H. O'Neill & Co. Department after department was added and by 1890 the store was said to be the largest in the world.

One of O'Neill's best customers was Henry B. Plant, Florida railroad magnate who was then building a string of swank tourist hotels to promote business for his roads and out do Flagler on the East Coast. All the furnishings for the hotels were bought by Plant at O'Neill's store.

Desiring to see some of the hotels he was helping furnish, O'Neill came to Florida for the first time during the winter of 1892-93 with a good friend, W. W. Jacobus, hat manufacturer of New Jersey. After touring around the state the two men finally arrived at the Plant System's fine hotel at Punta Gorda. There they learned about the good tarpon fishing in San Carlos Bay and in the Caloosahatchee and they headed for the Tarpon House at Punta Rassa.

Before he returned north, O'Neill managed to land two tarpon and was so thrilled by the sport that he came back to the Tarpon House each season for a number of years thereafter. Jacobus usually accompanied him. The two often went up the river to Fort Myers where they made many friends. O'Neill was deeply impressed by the natural beauty of the town and he often told Jacobus that all it needed to become the leading winter resort in Florida was a first class, modern tourist hotel. Joking, Jacobus asked him one day why he didn't go ahead and build one. O'Neill pondered a few minutes and then replied that he would do just that. And he meant it.

At that time, during the winter of 1896-97, there were three small hotels in the town: the Hendry House, owned by Louis A. Hendry, located on the river at the foot of Royal Palm Avenue; the Hill House, owned by Mrs. Mary F. Hill, located on the present site of the Franklin Arms, and the Fort Myers Inn, located on the river at what is now First and Citrus.

The Hendry House was the old home of Capt. F. A. Hendry. The captain sold it to his son Louis for \$7,000 when he moved to his ranch at Fort Thompson in 1888. Two years later Louis added fourteen rooms to the home and converted it into a hotel.

The Hill House was established by Mrs. Hill in 1889 soon after she moved to Fort Myers from Alabama. In the beginning, Mrs. Hill had merely a small boarding house; later, however, she added many rooms and in time the Hill house became one of the leading hostellries of the town.

The Fort Myers Inn was originally located on the river near the foot of Park Avenue. It had been built in 1883 by Dan C. Kantz and his sister, Mrs. Sarah Knight Titus, and was first called the Keystone Hotel and then the Caloosa House. In 1895 Kantz and Mrs. Titus decided that the hotel was located too far from the business section so they called in Contractor T. M. Park and had the building moved down First Street to its new location. Kantz and his sister continued living in the hotel even while it was being moved. Later the property was sold to Dr. W. S. Turner, of Holder, Fla., who greatly enlarged it and changed the name to the River-view Hotel.

In June, 1897, O'Neill announced that he had purchased the Hendry House and intended to build a 50-room hotel costing at least \$70,000 which would be completely modern in every respect. The story was blazoned all over the front page of the Fort Myers Press—it was the most important news that had broken in the town for many a year.

The Hendry House was torn down in August, 1897, and construction work on the new hotel was rushed by Miller & Kennard, contractors of Tampa, who brought in large crews of workmen to handle the job. The building was finished in mid-January, 1898, and F. H. Abbott, the first manager, proudly announced that on each floor there was a ladies' retiring and bath room with two porcelain tubs and that the gentlemen also were provided with a toilet and bath room on each floor. Everything was ultra-modern, Abbott declared.

The grand opening of the hotel, first named the Fort Myers Hotel, was held Monday evening, January 15, 1898. It was the biggest social event in the history of the town. Those who attended were: Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Cole, Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Hoyer, Philip Isaacs, John W. Salsbury, B. T. Luttrell, P. John Hart, Mr. and Mrs. Harvie E. Heitman, Miss Josie Hendry, Mr. and Mrs. George R. Shultz, Major James Evans, Mrs. James West, Miss Lulu West, Miss Bessie Thorp, Nathan G. Stout, Miss Ola McLeod, J. S. Lightsey, John David Pool, W. F. Powell, M. J. O. Travers, J. D. O. Travers, H. A. Hendry, F. A. Hendry, William Wall Hendry, Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Washburn, Mrs. C. A. McDougald, W. P. Bethea, Miss Flossie Hill, George White, Miss Laura Gonzalez, Mr. and Mrs. T. H. Levens, Charles F. Roan, Capt. and Mrs. W. M. White, Frank Carson, T. J. Roberts and Frank Kellow.

O'Neill, merchant prince and hotel owner, must be credited with giving Fort Myers its first real advertising in northern newspapers. To attract guests to his new establishment he paid for large ads in leading papers in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington, extolling the Caloosahatchee area in general and Fort Myers in particular. He even employed a crack publicity man to herald the activities of socialites who

stopped at his hotel. Every time one of them caught a fish or shot an alligator on a trip up the river an account of his exploit was sent to his home town paper.

O'Neill also must be given credit for planting the first royal palms in Fort Myers. His gardener brought them in from Cuba early in 1898 along with many other tropical and semi-tropical palms, plants and shrubs. The royals grew rapidly and became majestically beautiful. They soon became so outstanding that they were the principal feature of the hotel gardens and, because of them, the name of the hotel was then changed to the Royal Palm Hotel. To avoid confusion, that name for the hotel will be used hereafter.

The New York merchant also must be given credit for another important "first." The Royal Palm was the first building in Fort Myers wired for electricity and O'Neill helped materially in making possible Fort Myers' first electric light plant, the brain child of Albertus A. Gardner.

#### *Fort Myers Gets All Lit Up*

Electric lights were no novelty for Fort Myers fifty years ago. In fact, the people of the community were among the first in the entire nation to witness the miracle of lights being lit by that mysterious phenomenon known as electricity.

That history making event occurred Saturday night, March 27, 1887, when lights were turned on for the first time at Seminole Lodge, the winter home of Thomas A. Edison.

At that time the citizens of Fort Myers confidently expected that Edison would provide street lights for the town within another year. But the electrical wizard was unable to return to Fort Myers the following winter, even though he continued to maintain his winter home, and nothing came from the street lighting proposal.

But the thought of supplying Fort Myers with electricity kept simmering in the mind of one of the town's most progressive and energetic citizens, Albertus A. Gardner, known to everyone as Bertie Gardner.

Born in Cleveland, O., in 1858, Gardner came to Fort Myers in 1883 with his father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. William P. Gardner, and his sister, Miranda M. Gardner.

The father was a horticulturist and established the first nursery in Fort Myers, importing from New Orleans and Cuba a large stock of orange trees, loquats, Japanese persimmons, tangerines, mangerines, satsumas and many new varieties of roses and other ornamental stock. Becoming one of the town's best boosters, he contributed \$600 to induce Stafford C. Cleveland to set up his printing plant in Fort Myers and thereby provide the town with its first newspaper.

In 1888, the Gardners—father, son and daughter—started the Seminole Canning Company. They bought guavas at 25 to 40 cents a bushel and hired people to make them into jellies and preserves. Through

aggressive salesmanship they succeeded in selling large quantities of their products to hotels, railroads and wholesale grocers throughout the state. Their concern became one of the town's most flourishing enterprises. It provided a market for all the guavas grown in the locality and at times employed more than fifty persons. Bertie Gardner managed the concern.

For many years Gardner mulled over the idea of setting up an electric light plant in conjunction with the canning company. In 1892 he talked over the project with leading citizens and merchants and they promised him their support. But then the 1893 panic came along and few people had enough money to wire their homes or business places for electricity. So the idea lay dormant.

When O'Neill announced his plans for a modern hotel in July, 1897, Gardner felt that the time had come for him to go ahead. If he could make arrangements with O'Neill to supply electricity for the hotel he would be assured of enough business to pay part of the expense of operating a plant. O'Neill had planned to install a dynamo at the hotel and generate his own electricity but when informed of Gardner's plan he readily consented to become his first customer.

Gardner then applied to the town council for a franchise. One was granted him on October 9, 1897. It was to last for five years and the councilmen agreed to pay \$300 a year for ten 32-candlepower incandescent street lights. Gardner ordered a forty-horsepower boiler and a 500-light dynamo and, when they arrived, installed them in a section of the canning factory.

The lights were turned on at dusk Saturday, January 1, 1898. Reported the Press: "A soft, bright light suddenly appeared in all houses



*Photo Courtesy of Eleanor H. D. Pearse*

The Fort Myers Yacht and Country Club, first opened in 1908, had a brief existence, due to the fact that members had great difficulty in reaching the clubhouse because of the deep sand in the roads.

and stores connected with the electric light plant and for the first time electricity was used as a lighting power by the general public in Lee County."

After an hour or so the lights dimmed and went out. Adjustments had to be made to the "complicated machinery." But soon the current came back on again and everything went fine until midnight when the current was again shut off, this time for the remainder of the night. Connections with the hotel were made four days later.

All night service was provided only for the hotel. For all other customers, the current was shut off promptly at 11 p. m. Old timers recall that the lights in their homes always blinked several times exactly at 10:45. That was a signal the lights would go out fifteen minutes later. Of course that meant that all the young fellows who were courting their girls had to hurry up and put on their hats and leave.

In the beginning, the hotel used 98 lights. All other customers in town used 103 more, making a grand total of 201. The more prosperous citizens had as many as four or five lights placed at strategic places in their homes; others got along with one or two. The town people paid 35 cents a week for each light, of 16 candlepower. Current was not provided, of course, for electrical appliances—they weren't heard of then.

The revenue of the light company was less than \$70 a week by the end of January, 1898; nevertheless, Gardner was so encouraged by the way people were then contracting for the installation of lights that he ordered another 50-horsepower boiler and a 640-watt dynamo. They were installed in May. Before they arrived the capacity of the plant was overtaxed when two "magnificent, brilliant incandescents of 200-candlepower each" were turned on in the hotel grounds, "casting a brilliant light which made the vicinity almost as bright as day."

The first ten street lights paid for by the town were installed along First Street from the hotel down to the Fort Myers Inn at Citrus. Now, for the first time, people could walk along the town's main thoroughfare after dark without carrying lanterns.

#### *Punta Rassa Hears Tragic News*

It was 11:18 p. m., Monday, February 15, 1898.

The telegraph instrument in the cable relay station at Punta Rassa suddenly began clicking madly. It had been silent for almost an hour and Operator W. H. McDonald was dozing in an easy chair by the window. Leaping to his feet, he answered the call. A tragic message began racing in over the wire.

The U. S. Battleship Maine had been sunk in the harbor at Havana! Blown up by the Spaniards! More than two hundred officers and enlisted men were dead!

Details began coming in, as fast as the Havana operator could send them. While taking the messages and relaying them on, McDonald yelled loudly for Station Manager George R. Shultz to come and help him. A

minute later, Shultz came running, fastening his suspenders as he ran. He was still half asleep but when McDonald breathlessly told him what had happened, all trace of sleep vanished.

McDonald and Shultz were the first persons in the country to learn of the disaster which precipitated the Spanish-American War. They worked for more than thirty-six hours without rest. The telegraph instruments never ceased clicking. Government messages kept going back and forth, and newspapers and press associations clamored for more details from their Havana correspondents. Only the seriousness of the emergency kept McDonald and Shultz from dropping from exhaustion. On the third day two assistants were sent in to help them.

During the next year the Punta Rassa cable station was the most important communication center in the South. Its importance did not diminish when the Spaniards closed the Havana station. The cable touched at Key West and all messages between that port and the mainland had to go through Shultz's station. Dispatches of newspaper correspondents rushed to Key West were endless. And the war department kept sending messages night and day.

Sam Thompson was employed by the telegraph company to patrol the wires between Punta Rassa and Fort Myers, to make sure that no Spaniards slipped through and cut them. And when war was officially declared, a home guard company was hurriedly formed at Fort Myers to protect the line and cable station.

The Spanish-American War was a godsend to the cattlemen of Florida. The industry had been in the doldrums since shortly after the end of the Cuban insurrection in 1878. It had been kept alive only by the Key West market where Charles W. Hendry had gone to open a slaughter house for T. E. Langford and James E. Hendry, Sr., then the principal cattle shippers. But the Key West demand had not been strong enough to keep up the price and best quality steers were bringing only \$8 a head.

After the United States occupation forces took over Cuba, the demand for cattle soared, and so did the price. Within three months steers were bringing \$15 a head. Hendry announced on February 28, 1899, that he and Langford had sold 5,000 head for \$75,000. A few months later the price jumped to \$18.

On one day in July, 1900, a total of 2,747 head were shipped out of Punta Rassa by Langford & Hendry, W. H. Towles, and R. I. O. Travers.

The ranges of Lee County soon were stripped of marketable steers and every man who could ride a horse and was willing to drive cattle was pressed into service to help bring in herds from counties far up the state. Punta Rassa again became one of the leading cattle shipping ports of the nation, just as it had been twenty years before.

The Cuban demand for cattle continued strong for several years after the turn of the century and the cattlemen of Lee County prospered. Part of the money went into the stock raising or commercial enterprises; some went to found financial institutions, and some went into fine homes.

*Cattlemen Start a Building Boom*

A building boom, particularly in the construction of homes, was started by cattlemen in 1899. But, strangely enough, the boom wasn't touched off by Lee County cattlemen. They built homes later—after the fuse had been lit by two cattlemen from the Far West, John T. Murphy and Daniel Augustus Greene Floweree, both of Helena, Montana.

Murphy and Floweree had been associated in the cattle business for years and had accumulated fortunes, estimated at more than a million dollars. They were close friends and when Murphy said he wanted to go to Florida to see what it was like, Floweree said he would go along. That was in December, 1898.

The two men arrived in Tampa early in January. One day Murphy happened to read a story in the Tampa Tribune which aroused his interest. It stated that Florida was having the biggest cattle trade in its history and that thousands of steers were being shipped out of Punta Rassa to Cuba each month. The story also said that Fort Myers had become the cow capital of the state and was the home of many cattle kings.

Being cattle kings themselves, Murphy and Floweree decided to go to Fort Myers and have a look at the South Florida monarchs. On their way down the coast they stopped at Punta Rassa and watched cattle being loaded on schooners from Havana. They were not deeply impressed—by the cattle. Murphy said he had never seen such woebegone animals and Floweree emphatically agreed.

It was a different story, however, when the two men got to Fort Myers. The beauty of the Caloosahatchee and the charm of the small town won their admiration. They engaged rooms at the Royal Palm Hotel and decided to remain the rest of the winter. And before spring came they selected Fort Myers as the place for making their winter homes.

Getting Harvie Heitman to act as his agent, Murphy bought about 450 feet of river frontage just east of Fowler Street, paying \$3,500 for the tract. He then sold about half of the land to Floweree. The two men awarded contracts to C. S. Caldwell, of Tampa, for residences and told him that work on them must be completed by the following winter.

Murphy's home was built at the corner of First and Fowler and Floweree's adjoining on the east. The Press reported that Murphy's place cost \$15,000 and Floweree's \$20,000, staggering amounts for those days. Only the finest materials were used and today, nearly half a century later, they are still show places of the city. They were completed in December, 1899, and the two families moved in.

During the following winter Murphy and Floweree invested heavily in citrus land. Floweree bought a large tract near Estero and also a 600-acre tract on the river just east of Alva. On this latter tract he planted 150 acres of grapefruit trees and 30 acres of oranges. He turned the management of the grove over to Heitman who acted as his agent and manager from then on. In less than ten years the grove became one of the most productive and most profitable in the state.

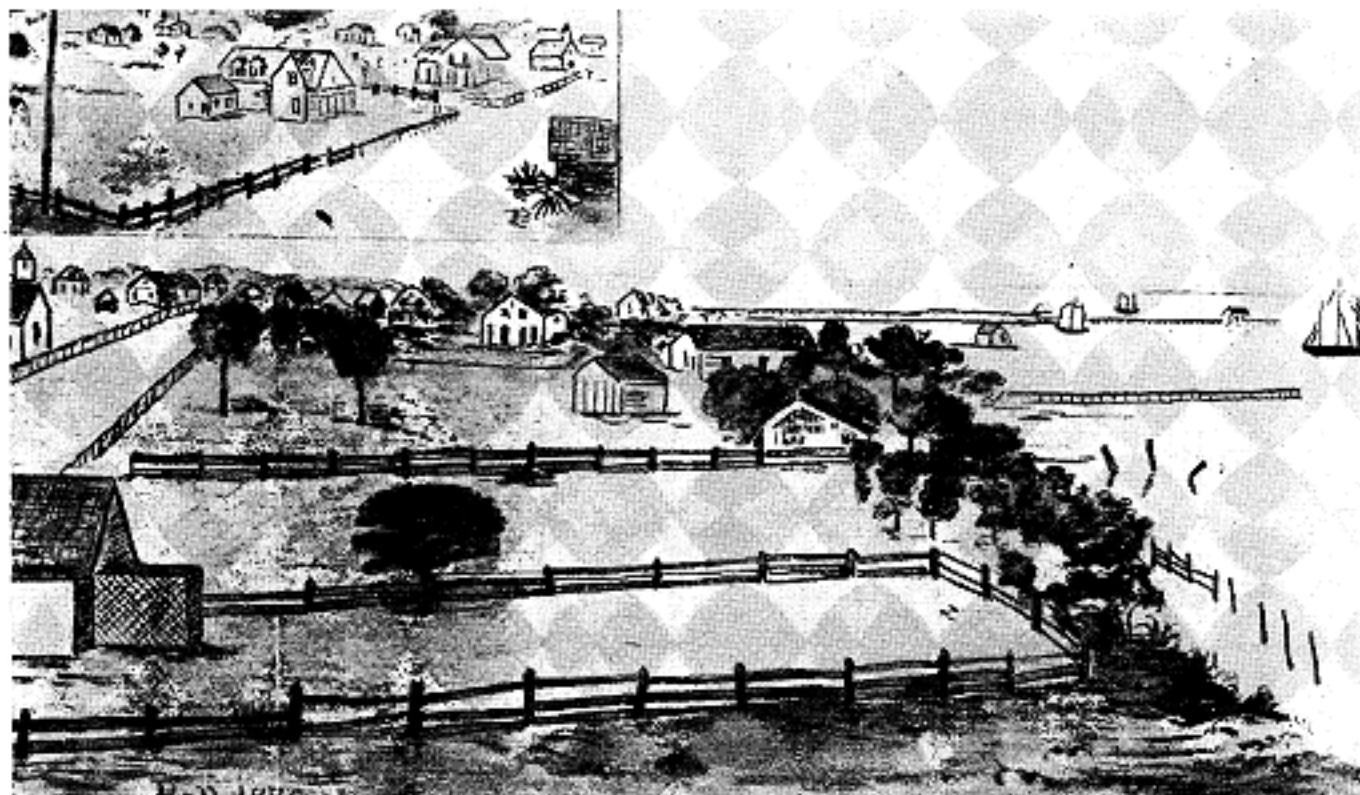
Construction of the Murphy and Floweree homes gave an impetus to building activities in the town. Dr. J. E. Brecht early in 1900 built a fine home on First directly across from the Murphy home and Walter G. Langford built a little further east. Homes also were constructed for Hugh McDonald, Jr., Louis H. Locklar, C. A. McDougald and W. H. Towles. The house and lot of Dr. G. M. White just east of the Royal Palm Hotel was sold to Mrs. S. C. Bass for \$6,000. Mrs. Mary F. Hill made a two-story addition to the Hill House. Carl F. Roberts completed a three-story business and apartment building. Arthur F. Fox, of Michigan, built a fine home on the north side of the river.

Building continued active for several years and was climaxed in 1903 by the construction of the new Methodist Church.

The edifice was made possible by the generosity of Hugh O'Neill. After completing his new hotel he pledged \$4,000 to the Methodist trustees saying he would like to have a church built in memory of his only son, Hugh O'Neill, Jr., who had died in 1892.

O'Neill's donation was not accepted for several years. Old timers say that the church trustees wanted the money but that several of them had little use for the donor, due to the fact that he was "a drinking man" and even permitted drinks to be served in that hotel of his where northerners were "carrying on" during the winter months.

But on March 16, 1902, O'Neill died suddenly in New York at the age of 58. Soon thereafter the feelings of the church objectors quickly changed. Really, O'Neill hadn't been such a bad man after all. Oh yes, he took a drink occasionally, but perhaps that hotel of his may have helped the town a little—some of his guests certainly had invested lots of money



*Photo Courtesy of Henry Bartley*

This is Fort Myers as it looked in 1885 from the roof of the Caloosa Hotel, located on First Street near the foot of Park.

in Fort Myers. Besides, that \$4,000 of his would be used for a good purpose. The contribution was accepted, four months after O'Neill's death.

The site of the old church was not large enough for the proposed new structure so Marion Hendry, one of the trustees, bought a 132-foot lot at First and Royal Palm, adjoining the church, for \$500. It was purchased October 6, 1902, at public auction from the Gooseman estate, Hendry acting for the church.

Work on the new edifice was started that winter and on November 22, 1903, the services were conducted in it by Rev. S. W. Lawler. The first wedding in it occurred Wednesday night, November 25, when Miss Mary Josephine Hendry was married to Harry Robert Knight, of Savannah, Ga. The church was dedicated March 6, 1904, by Bishop A. W. Wilson, of Baltimore, Md. It was named the O'Neill Memorial Church, as O'Neill had requested.

#### *Fort Myers Gets Telephones*

Telephone service was needed in Lee County at the close of the century—and needed badly. Cattlemen were doing a rushing business and so were the citrus growers. They wanted to keep in daily contact with their representatives in Fort Myers but the only means of rapid communication available was the telegraph, and only a few lived near telegraph stations.

A nineteen-year-old youth saw the opportunity and took advantage of it. He was Gilmer McCrary Heitman, young brother of the up-and-coming Harvie E. Heitman.

Gilmer had come to Fort Myers from his home in Lexington, N. C., a few years before and had been working in his brother's store. One day he heard several cattlemen telling how telephones would help them in carrying on their business. They expressed the wish that someone would start a telephone company.

Deciding quickly that he would be that someone, Gilmer began making inquiries regarding how much the necessary equipment would cost and where it could be obtained. He counted his money and found he could just finance the undertaking. So on January 2, 1900, he asked the county commissioners for a franchise to maintain a service throughout the county, and got it.

Wasting no time, Heitman bought a 50-drop switchboard, wet batteries, and the rest of the equipment needed. Opening the exchange on the second floor of the new Heitman building at First and Jackson, he employed Mrs. Alice Henry Tooke, now Mrs. Alice McCann, as the first operator. The system was put into operation Wednesday, February 21, 1900. Reported the Press: "Our business men today had the novel experience of talking to each other over the wires. Time should prove that the telephone is a great convenience."

The first Fort Myers subscribers to the phone service were the Fort Myers Inn, W. R. Washburn's store, Hibble & Lightsey's Meat Market,

Carl F. Roberts, Dr. E. M. Williams, Evans & Co., Fort Myers Press and Post Office, George F. Ireland, Seminole Canning Co., Seminole Electric Light Plant, R. I. O. Travers, James E. Hendry, Sr., H. A. Blake, Dr. V. H. Voorhis, Judge Robert Cranford, Frank Braman, Bard L. Hendry and Harvie E. Heitman.

The telephone lines were extended to Buckingham a few months later and to Naples on February 1, 1901. The line to LaBelle was opened on September 2, 1902, and on the same date the Arcadia-Punta Gorda line was completed by the Arcadia Telephone Co. To celebrate the tie-up of the two systems, Heitman announced that Sunday service would be given as soon as fifteen more subscribers were obtained.

That goal was reached early in the following January and on the 18th the Sunday service was provided, two hours in the morning and two hours late in the afternoon. Mrs. McCann declares that she was kept busy Sunday afternoons by young lovers making dates for Sunday evenings, and spooning over the lines.

Fort Myers people were able to talk to Tampa for the first time on February 2, 1904, and to Marco on March 30, 1905. On June 25 of the same year rates were reduced from \$2 a month to \$1.50. And on November 15, 1905, all night service was started—before that the phones went dead at 10 p. m. and didn't come back to life again until six the next morning.

Fort Myers now had truly "metropolitan service"—almost. The phones still crackled, and hissed, and hummed, and sizzled, particularly when electrical storms were nearby. Complaints were numerous but Owner Heitman promised that when his company began to show a profit, better equipment would be installed. And in 1907 the promise was kept.

#### *At the Turn of the Century*

The arrival of the twentieth century was celebrated in a grand manner in Fort Myers.

A crowd began gathering at First and Hendry early in the evening and continued steadily to get larger. At 11 p. m. the church bells began ringing. This was done, the Press reported, "to honor the dying century in a fitting way."

At the stroke of midnight the town cut loose in earnest. Whistles were tied down at the Seminole Canning Company and on the steamer "H. B. Plant," anchored in the river. Guns, pistols and even cannon were shot. Firecrackers popped. Everyone yelled. A procession, headed by drums and fifes and followed by a horde of shouting men and boys, paraded up and down the street. Gilbert's Oyster Saloon was packed to the doors. Fort Myers had a merry time.

The town really had cause to rejoice. Despite the setback caused by the panic of 1893, the population had increased 64 per cent during the preceding ten years, as shown by the 1900 federal census. True enough, the total number of inhabitants was still under a thousand—943, to be

exact. But a gain of any kind during that bleak decade, for the nation as a whole, was something to crow about.

The editor of the Press, however, was perturbed by the census figures. "Surely," he declared, "Fort Myers must have shown a larger increase than the census indicates. Perhaps the enumerators failed to count many of our inhabitants."

That may have been the case, but probably wasn't. Actually, Fort Myers was still a small frontier cow town, regardless of the 64 per cent population gain.

Indians still came into town with their hides and pelts. Most of them now traded at Henderson's general store. He paid top prices: 35 cents to \$1 for alligator hides, 50 cents for coon skins, and from \$2 to \$8 for otter skins, depending on their quality. The rear of his store often was piled to the ceiling with hides and skins being held for shipment.

One of Henderson's best customers was Bill Brown, one of the most unusual characters that ever came to the Land of the Caloosahatchee. A well educated Englishman from London, Brown went deep into the Glades early in the Nineties with his young wife and two small children and established an Indian trading post near Fort Shackelford, about seventy miles southeast of Fort Myers. Why he went to that spot at the end of nowhere, far from any other white settlers, no one ever knew. But he loved it there, and so did his family. The Indians soon learned to trust him, as they did few other whites, and he built up a thriving business.

Several times a year Brown came into Fort Myers with his great covered wagon, hauled by three yoke of oxen. He traveled only seven or eight miles a day and the trip took him about nine days each way. On February 25, 1898, he brought in Doctor Tom, chief of the Seminoles, to see a physician. The chief, then 85 years old, was deeply suspicious of the whites and before he would consent to come to Fort Myers, Brown had to agree to leave his wife and children at Tom's village in the Glades as "hostages."

On his trips to Fort Myers, Brown brought in great quantities of hides and pelts and traded them for all sorts of supplies needed by his family and the Indians. Henderson always liked to see him come and so did the people of Fort Myers who turned out en masse to welcome him.

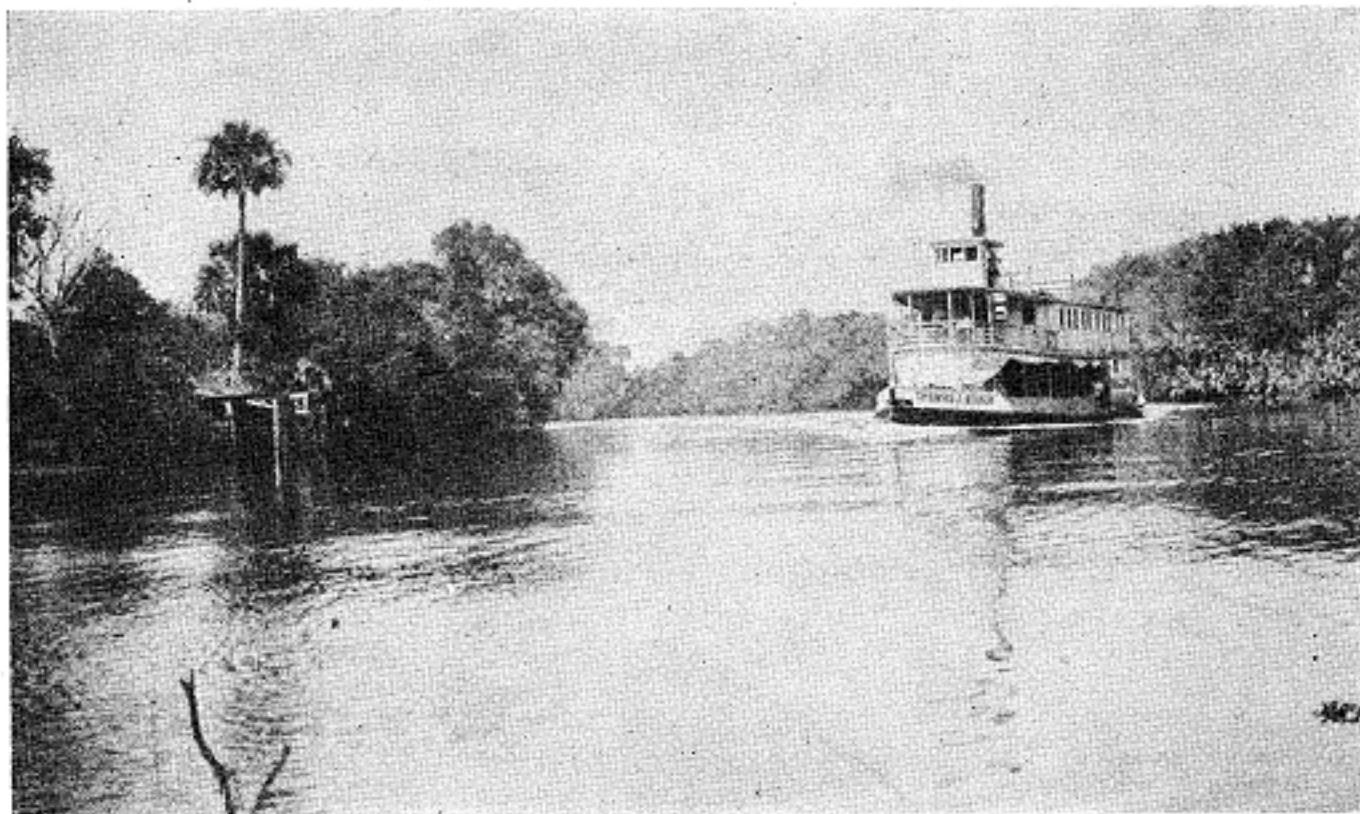
By the turn of the century Harvie Heitman's store had become one of the leading establishments of its kind in South Florida. He was a good advertiser and believed in giving good bargains. Besides, he was selling large quantities of fertilizers and general supplies to grove owners whose properties he managed. Naturally he did not lose money on such sales. He also owned a large supply house at Alva. He was reported to be getting prosperous.

Ed Evans now had his thriving store at Howell A. Parker's old stand at the southeast corner of First and Hendry. He was the town's "oldest" merchant and still boasted that he handled everything from the cradle to the grave.

The columns of the Press show who the leading merchants were in 1901. Here are some of them: H. E. Heitman Company, general store; E. L. Evans, general store; Foxworthy & Co., clothing, novelties; C. A. McDougald, clothing for men, women and children; E. M. Williams, drug store; George F. Ireland, hardware; Carl F. Roberts, funeral director, also, rough and dressed lumber; N. E. Thornhill, racket store; Mrs. M. E. Leak, dry goods, notions, millinery; A. W. Rogers, jeweler, and W. R. Washburn & Co., men's clothing, fishing tackle, stationery and jewelry.

Other advertisers around the turn of the century were: Fort Myers Saw Mill, Wm. Hanson and son, proprietors; J. C. Jeffcott, painter and decorator; M. French, shoe and harness repair shop; W. C. Battey, real estate; Frank B. Tippins, livery stable; R. L. Mitchell, bicycle repair shop; Frank Kellow, justice of the peace and collector; C. F. Cates, wood-working and blacksmithing; Wm. P. Henley, contractor and builder; Rab Davis, hack line to Punta Gorda; Fort Thompson Stock Farm, James E. and George M. Hendry, proprietors, and the Sisters Hotel, at Sanibel Island, operated by George O. Barnes and Mrs. Lavinia Brown, "\$1.50 a day \$10 a week with excellent meals included, no heavy drinking tolerated."

Three hotels in Fort Myers were regular advertisers: The Fort Myers (Royal Palm) Hotel, F. H. Abbott, manager; the Hill House, Mrs. M. F. Hill, owner, and the Fort Myers Inn, Miss Lee Murray, proprietor. Professional cards were carried by Dr. V. H. Voorhis, dentist; by Dr. W. B. Winkler, physician and surgeon, and by three attorneys, Louis A. Hendry, Frank C. Alderman and Newton Hanson.



*Photo Courtesy of Mrs. Harry Laycock*

In the days when steamboats plied the Caloosahatchee, the "Thomas A. Edison" was the pride of the Menge Brothers Steamboat Line.

The Press was the only newspaper in town at the turn of the century but it had had much trouble, and disastrous competition, during the preceding decade. It had barely managed to survive.

The paper's troubles were caused mainly by Editor Frank Stout's political views. Back north he had been an ardent Republican; in Fort Myers he tried to bury his Republican ideas and run a "neutral" paper. But he had failed to inter his Republicanism deep enough to please his rabidly Democratic readers, and advertisers, and there was talk of giving backing to a competing newspaper "to reflect more correctly the views of the community."

In an attempt to prevent such an eventuality, Editor Stout announced on April 19, 1894, that he had made Dr. W. W. Foose "political editor" and that henceforth "The Press will no longer be neutral in politics but will be a straight-forward Democratic organ."

Dr. Foose soon began writing vitriolic editorials which seemed to please everyone. But in September he committed an unpardonable crime. He damned the "political ring" in the county. He asked: "Is there favoritism being shown to relatives of one family in the politics of Lee County?"

Answering his own rhetorical question, he pointed out that Capt. F. A. Hendry was representative and then he went on to say that R. A. Henderson, candidate for county treasurer, I. S. Singletary, candidate for tax collector, and Taylor Frierson, candidate for school board, were all related by marriage to the Hendrys; that George W. Hendry, candidate for county judge, was of course a Hendry, and so was W. M. Hendry, county clerk as well as recorder of marks and brands.

Dr. Foose continued: "There is a well founded rumor that James E. Hendry will be recommended to succeed W. H. Towles on the board of county commissioners. Are not the offices of this county too much in one family? Understand, we have nothing personal against the Hendrys as they are all good and true citizens, enterprising and law abiding, honorable men, but honest now, is it all right for all the offices to be in one family? . . . Is it not time to call a halt?"

The reaction to this editorial was appalling. Members of the Hendry clan with all their friends rose up in wrath. Editor Stout was stunned. And in the next edition he announced that Dr. Foose no longer would be political editor. But the damage had been done. Stout's political enemies ganged up against him and financed the establishment of another newspaper, The Tropical News, edited by Philip Isaacs.

The two editors, both able men, fought viciously—in the columns of their papers. They provided interesting reading for the town but both lost money. On August 1, 1895, Stout sold the Press to Charles W. Hill, of South Dakota. But Hill could not make a success of it and he was forced to turn it back to Stout on October 31, 1895. During the following March Stout sold it again, this time to J. D. Rose and Hal B. Selby.

Finally, on January 7, 1897, the two papers consolidated. The Tropical News went out of existence and Isaacs became editor of the Press. Nathan G. Stout, son of Frank Stout, bought an interest in the paper on May 13, 1897, and continued to be connected with it until 1913.

### *They Had Their Joys—and Sorrows*

Few towns in the United States were farther removed from "civilization" than Fort Myers back in the Nineties.

The Plant System railroad which ran into Punta Gorda was a rickety affair and trains seldom if ever arrived at their destination on time. To get to Punta Gorda from Tampa required more than a fourteen hour journey. That wasn't the worst of it. The one train a day arrived in Punta Gorda in the evening and Fort Myers-bound passengers had to remain there overnight.

When the "St. Lucie" was at the dock the south-bound travelers went on board and engaged a stateroom from Purser Andrew Kinzie paying him \$1. Accommodations on the boat were excellent and Kinzie says that travelers always went there instead of to a hotel. The rates were cheaper and, besides, the passengers could keep on sleeping when the steamer pulled out at 7 a. m.

The trip from Punta Gorda to Fort Myers required eight hours, never less, often much longer. This meant that more than two full days were required to make the Tampa-Fort Myers journey, counting the Punta Gorda layover. Better time could have been made by going all the way by steamer—but no steamers were on the run at that time.

Because of the transportation difficulties and delays, road shows and circuses never included Fort Myers on their itineraries. But that didn't mean that Fort Myers people suffered from a dearth of entertainment. They "rolled their own."

Much of the rolling was done by the Fort Myers Dramatic Society, as gay an aggregation of amateur Thespians as was ever assembled. The society made its initial bow to the public Thursday night, October 30, 1890, when it presented "Lady Audrey's Secret" to an appreciative audience. Members of the cast included Harry Higginbotham, Mrs. Higginbotham, Miss Mellie Stout, George Talboys, William Jeffcott, D. C. Kantz, G. D. Brockman, E. P. Kantz, and Sattie Parker. Ice cream, coffee, cake and popcorn were served between scenes and at the close of the performance by ladies of the Episcopal Church. A splendid time was had by one and all, the Press reported.

The society continued to present plays all through the Nineties. Some of the other men and women who were star performers were L. C. Stewart, W. L. Voris, Harvie E. Heitman, W. R. Washburn, Walter Wilhelm, Miss Laura Gonzalez, Mrs. G. W. Hendry, Miss Penelope Pearde, and Miss Stella Langford.

The plays were staged in Phoenix Hall, the town's one and only gathering place for many years. Political rallies were held there, as well

as dances, socials, lectures, and even evangelistic meetings. It also served as a roller skating rink and for several winters young Nate Stout acted as skating instructor, teaching youngsters and grown-ups how to keep on their feet.

The hall was located on the second floor of a two-story frame building on the southeast corner of First and Hendry erected in 1890 by Howell A. Parker who then owned the town's largest general store. The hall was opened Tuesday night, June 24, 1890, with a dance and supper given by Royal Palm Lodge No. 16, Knights of Pythias and was packed with Pythians from as far away as Tampa and Key West.

The upsurge in business activities and general optimism which followed the Big Freezes of 1894-95 was properly accompanied by a rebirth of the Fort Myers Brass Band which had died a sudden death during the panic days. The band members included M. B. Goodell, first cornet; L. A. Farrington, solo alto; Joseph W. Henley, first alto; W. A. Marsh, first tenor; Eugene M. Reynolds, baritone; William P. Henley, tuba; T. T. Henderson, bass drum and cymbals; Conrad Menge, second alto, and T. H. Levens, snare drum.

A fund was raised by public subscription and white duck uniforms were purchased for the band members. A band stand was erected and weekly concerts were given. On July 4, 1896, the band furnished music for a big public celebration at Tournament Park attended by more than 1,500 persons and featured by races, a ball game, contests of various kinds, and a picnic barbecue. During the day the band played 80 selections but the band members, to prove they weren't exhausted, kept on going and furnished music that night for a public ball in Phoenix Hall.

Not satisfied with having merely a band, the Fort Myers men decided during the winter of 1895-96 to organize a baseball club. A meeting of all the ball players and would-be ball players was held January 17, 1896, in Phoenix Hall and officers were elected: Frank McNulty, president; E. H. Graves, vice-president, and Neal Coston, secretary and treasurer. W. H. McNulty was chosen captain.

Practice games were held regularly thereafter on the sand lot east of Hendry Street just behind the present Edison Theatre. The first regular game was played July 4, 1896, when the Reds beat the Blues, 24 to 4. The players on the two teams were: Will McNulty, Nathan Swain, Wall Hendry, Nate Stout, Bard Hendry, Oscar Ball, Joe Gant, J. Hoag, Jr., Joe Haskew, Al Gilbert, George Baston, Frank Kellow, Frank Bell, Alva Finney, Hal Selby, Hiram Stevens, Gus Larson, and Garrett Dykstra. Wall Hendry starred, scoring five runs.

The women of Fort Myers didn't permit the men to run away with all the organizing. They met June 6, 1900, at the home of Mrs. Olive E. Stout and organized a Woman's Club. Mrs. Stout was elected to serve as the first president; Mrs. H. E. Heitman, vice-president; Miss Flossie Hill, recording secretary; Miss Mary Finney, corresponding secretary, and Mrs. Julia Hanson, treasurer.

To make sure that the club meetings wouldn't end up in hair pulling, the members passed a resolution forbidding "political or social discussions." They decided that they should study current events and music and discuss domestic questions. The first topics selected for discussion were the history and geography of the Boer War, the characteristics of the English, Boers and Kaffirs, and the probable effects of the war upon civilization. The members also agreed that a regular topic of discussion should be the various phases of the Paris Exposition.

The Woman's Club became in time one of the strongest organizations of the city and the members, disregarding the resolution they had passed, took a leading part in public affairs, helping greatly to make Fort Myers the city it is today. Mrs. Julia Hanson was president of the club for twenty-nine years.

Three events of historic importance occurred during the first year of the twentieth century: Thomas A. Edison returned to his winter home after an absence of fourteen years, the town's first ice plant went into operation, and the town's first bank was opened.

The electrical wizard returned with a party of seven on Wednesday, February 27, 1901, on the steamer "H. B. Plant." To honor his distinguished passenger, Capt. A. F. Gonzalez flew all the steamer's flags, and to let Fort Myers know that he had someone of real importance on board he tied down the steamer's whistle while coming up the river.



*Photo Courtesy of Mrs. Harry Laycock*

For nearly a half century the most famous winter resident of Fort Myers was Thomas A. Edison, the electrical wizard. He is shown here standing in front of his winter home, Seminole Lodge. The photograph was taken in 1902.

Included in Edison's party were Mrs. Edison, Miss Grace Miller, Edith Edison, Madeline Edison, Master Charles Edison, a maid and a baby. They stopped at the Royal Palm Hotel but were unable to get rooms so they moved into the Edison winter home, even though it had not been opened up for them.

Edison and his family remained in Fort Myers five weeks. Before he left he gave Editor Philip Isaacs a real scoop, disclosing many details of his marvelous new invention, the storage battery, then being perfected by his technicians in his laboratory at Orange, N. J. Isaacs wired the story to the New York Journal where it got a page one play.

Of more importance to Fort Myers, Edison told Isaacs that he intended to return to his Fort Myers winter home every year thereafter. Time proved that he meant what he said. As a result of his annual visits, Fort Myers received priceless national publicity.

Quite possibly, Edison's announcement may not have meant as much to Fort Myers people as the news that the town's first ice plant was soon to be opened. They had been waiting for ice ever since Ed L. Evans talked of investing in an ice machine back in June, 1885. At that time the Press said: "We trust Evans will do so. Ice would be deemed a luxury at first but would soon be found to be an every-day necessity to every family that could afford its use."

Evans did not go through with the project. Finally, however, the necessary machinery was brought to town by the same man who gave Fort Myers its first electric lights, Albertus A. Gardner. The equipment cost \$5,500 and was installed by Gustav Widerquist at the plant of the Seminole Canning Company. The first ice was sold on Wednesday, May 22, 1901. Delivered, it cost a cent a pound; at the factory it was sold for fifty cents a hundred pounds.

After the ice plant went into operation Gardner stated that he had invested \$18,000 altogether in the cannery, electric light plant and the ice plant. And he also announced that the official name of the company was the Seminole Power & Ice Company.

Fort Myers got its first bank through the efforts of James E. Hendry, Sr. He was a heavy shareholder and a director of the Citizens Bank & Trust Company, of Tampa, headed by John Trice. For several years Hendry tried to persuade Trice to open a Fort Myers branch but the banker was hesitant. He did not think the cow town had good prospects.

Finally, however, Hendry persuaded Trice to visit Fort Myers and see for himself what the town was like. He came in November, 1900, and remained for several days, a guest at Hendry's home. He was introduced to all the leading citizens and entertained royally. Most favorably impressed, he said he would consult his directors about establishing a branch and one would be opened if they approved.

Hendry attended the next directors' meeting and argued eloquently and ably. Trice backed him up and the other directors were convinced that a Fort Myers branch would help the town—and be profitable for them. So they approved its establishment. Arrangements were made at

once with Harvie E. Heitman to construct an addition to his brick building at First and Jackson large enough to house the branch, and when the addition was completed and a brand new vault installed, the bank was opened, on May 2, 1901. James E. Foxworthy was named as the first manager. Hendry made the first deposit.

The bank served the town for six years and then was succeeded by a home-controlled institution, the Bank of Fort Myers.

By that time the town was booming as it had never boomed before, due almost entirely to the fact that it had finally got its long-awaited railroad.

### *Before the Railroad Came*

In bygone days news of ships and shipping always was big news in Fort Myers, simply because ships provided the only connection with the outside world.

And of all the ships which made news, none made headlines oftener than the trim, two-masted schooner "Lily White." She was a most capricious lady of the sea.

No one remembers where the "Lily White" was built or when she was first brought to West Coast waters. She first broke into print late in 1884 when Editor Stafford C. Cleveland booked passage on her to Fort Ogden and was shanghaied at Fort Myers by town boosters determined to get a newspaper.

Immediately thereafter the schooner was purchased by Langford & Hendry and used in the Key West and Havana cattle trade, and also for occasional trips to New Orleans.

In the fall of 1894 the "Lily White" really got started on her adventurous career. Sailing down the coast to Key West, she was caught in the hurricane of Tuesday, September 25. Her spars were blown away and she drifted helplessly away. When the storm ended she was gone, no one knew where. Scores of ships joined in a search for her. A week passed, and then another week, and she was given up for lost, with all her crew and cargo.

But on October 13, eighteen days later, she was sighted off Anastasia Island. She was towed to St. Augustine. Members of the crew were safe but 90 of the 110 cattle on board had died of thirst. Capt. Albert Griffin reported that the schooner had drifted around the Dry Tortugas, through the Florida Straits, and had been carried northward by the Gulf Stream.

Three years later the "Lily White" had another harrowing experience, this time more disastrous. Captain Griffin was pushing her along under full sail when suddenly, on July 15, 1897, she was struck by a wind spout. She capsized instantly. Nathan Swain, of Fort Myers, and a sailor, Charles Shorlund, were caught below deck and drowned. Captain Griffin, three crew members and four passengers were thrown overboard. They righted an 18-foot life boat after a three-hour struggle, rowed all night and late the next day were picked up by a sponge boat.

A search was started immediately for the "Lily White" but she could not be found. Again she had disappeared. But finally, fifteen days later, she was sighted off Key Largo, 90 miles east of Key West. Her masts, with the sails still on them, were hanging underneath, undamaged. No one ever was able to explain how she had drifted through the shallow waters near the keys without the masts being broken off. When she was righted the bodies of Swain and Shorlund were found inside the cabin.

In January, 1901, after being sold by Langford & Hendry to William H. Towles, the "Lily White" was seized at Punta Rassa by a federal revenue cutter. The revenue officers insisted that she was carrying a cargo of rum on which duty had not been paid. Towles protested his innocence but the government confiscated the schooner regardless. She was held in Key West for weeks and Towles finally had to pay a stiff fine to get her back again.

During the next nine years the "Lily White" led a decorous life. Her end came on December 22, 1910, when she caught fire while docked at Tampa and burned to the water's edge.

One of the worst disasters which ever befell a West Coast ship occurred March 3, 1898, when Capt. William D. Collier's schooner "Speedwell" was struck by a squall off Marquesas, eighteen miles from Key West, and capsized. Nine persons were caught in the cabin and drowned. The victims included three young sons of Captain Collier, Wilbur, Tom, and George, and six members of the Bradley Nichols family of Bridgeport, Conn. Captain Collier, two deck hands, Samuel Cates and Jesse Green, and a passenger R. W. Bates, of Fort Myers, were thrown clear of the schooner and were saved.

A tragedy mourned by everyone in Fort Myers occurred on the Caloosahatchee on Sunday, August 18, 1895, near Beautiful Island. Mary Frierson, pretty sixteen-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor Frierson, fell off the deck of the "City of Athens" while playing a game with her father. As the steamer drifted downstream, Frierson jumped into the river after his daughter. She had sunk twice when he reached her. Panic stricken, Mary grabbed him around the neck and both went down. Frierson finally managed to break her hold and get a strand of her hair in his teeth. But he was not a good swimmer and became exhausted. Both he and his daughter sank in the river.

Capt. Fred Menge lowered a boat immediately and rowed frantically to the place the man and girl had gone down. He managed to save Frierson but Mary could not be found. Returning to the steamer, Menge signalled for help—four quick blasts on the steamer whistle, repeated again and again.

Miles away, the signals were heard by Alfonse Gonzalez. A seaman since early boyhood, Gonzalez knew what the signals meant. He rushed into town, literally broke into Evans' general store, hurriedly took grappling hooks and long coils of rope, commandeered a sail boat at the dock and with some companions went up the river. Helped by his friends,

Gonzalez started dragging the river bottom. And on the first try one of the hooks caught in Mary's dress and her body, covered with black muck, was brought to the surface.

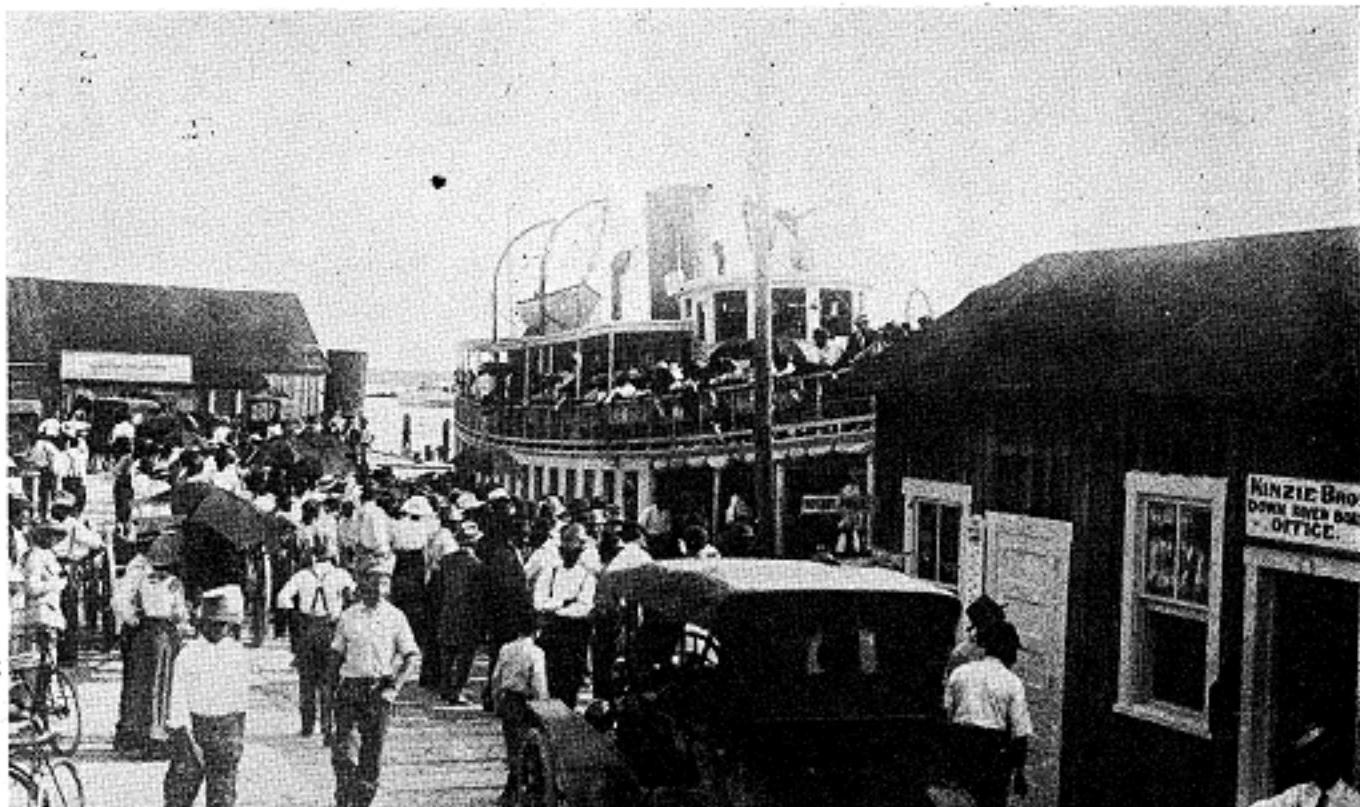
Fort Myers was stunned by the drowning. Everyone knew Mary Frierson, and everyone loved her. Probably no other tragedy in the town's history caused such sincere sorrow.

#### *When Steamers Ruled the River*

They were mighty ships, those steamers which plied the Caloosahatchee five decades ago, providing a puffing, glamorous link with the outside world. They were not mighty in size, or luxurious in accommodations, but they played a mighty part in the daily life of Fort Myers people.

Of all the steamers which came and went, none is better remembered than trim "St. Lucie," a double-decked, 120-foot stern-wheeler with two slim smokestacks up by its pilot house. A Mississippi River boat, she was brought to the West Coast by the Plant System on November 26, 1896, and placed on the Fort Myers-Punta Gorda run.

The "St. Lucie" had twenty-four staterooms, noted for their cleanliness, and a large dining room unexcelled for its meals. Of less than four-foot draft, she could safely navigate the shallow channel of the river, even when carrying a peak cargo of forty tons of freight and a hundred and fifty passengers. On its maiden trip out of Fort Myers she carried 1,100 boxes of oranges.



Excursions on the beautiful Caloosahatchee provided one of Fort Myers' favorite diversions in years gone by. Thousands of persons went each winter on the steamer "Dixie," shown above, which plied between Fort Myers and the islands. The "Dixie" was owned by the Kinzie Brothers Steamer Line.

Two famous West Coast captains commanded the "St. Lucie" at various times, C. L. Park and Herman Fischer. They took her through many bad storms without one fatal mishap and they brought to Fort Myers as passengers scores of men and women who are leading citizens of the city today. George Kinzie was chief engineer of the steamer for many years and his brother, Andrew, the purser.

The arrival of the "St. Lucie" signalled the termination of a transportation war. It also led to the departure from West Coast waters of two smaller steamers, the "Lawrence" and the "Clara" which had served Fort Myers on the Tampa run. They were owned by Charles F. Roan and John H. Roan, doing business as the Fort Myers Steamboat Company. Henry P. Plant, in his zeal to rule South Florida transportationally, bought out the Roans on October 10, 1896, thereby snuffing out competition he so much disliked. After this purchase, the Plant System began giving daily service to Punta Gorda.

The companion ship of the "St. Lucie" on the Punta Gorda run was the "Alice Howard," commanded by Capt. M. Johnson. She was a small steamer, with inadequate cargo space, and was replaced in 1900 by the "H. B. Plant," a 127-foot steamer which later became famous in West Coast waters, being commanded by Capt. Alfonse Gonzalez.

The "H. B. Plant" was brought from the St. Johns River by Capt. W. M. White. He left there January 12 and didn't stop until he reached Punta Rassa four days later. The steamer was used on the Punta Gorda run with the "St. Lucie" until the arrival of the "Thomas A. Edison."

This steamer was not owned by the Plant System. The proud owners were Fred and Conrad Menge. The "Edison" was built for the Menges in Apalachicola by Sam J. Johnson for river travel and drew less than two and one-half feet when fully loaded. She had two decks, was a stern-wheeler and had a capacity of 1,200 boxes of fruit. The Menges were good friends of the electrical wizard and named the steamer in his honor. The Menge brothers chartered her to the Plant System soon afterwards. She was used on the Punta Gorda run with Capt. Nick Armeda in command. She replaced the "H. B. Plant" which was taken to Tampa Bay and placed on the run between Tampa, St. Petersburg and Manatee.

The Menges at that time had a monopoly on the river traffic. Fred started the business in 1888 after he left the employ of Hamilton A. Disston. He had married Virginia Lee Hendry, daughter of Capt. F. A. Hendry, and wanted to remain in the Fort Myers area. So he purchased from Disston two boats he had used to carry supplies up the river, the "Gopher" and the "Mamie." The boats were small but large enough to carry all the products of the up-river settlers. One of his skippers was Capt. M. A. Gonzalez, first settler in Fort Myers.

In 1890 Menge bought the "City of Athens," a stern-wheel steamboat built for the Kissimmee-Fort Myers run, which had been partially destroyed by fire near Fort Myers. Rebuilding the boat, Menge put it back into service, making tri-weekly trips between Fort Myers and Fort

Thompson. Soon afterward he formed the Menge Brothers Steamboat Line with his brother Conrad.

During the tarpon season the Menges spent part of their time taking parties out in the Gulf. But after the Big Freeze, when the number of settlers increased rapidly, they dropped the sporting end of the business and concentrated on carrying freight and passengers. To make regular trips up the Orange River, they purchased the "Anah C.", a small stern-wheeler and placed her in operation in 1905.

Later, the Menge brothers bought and operated the "Gray Eagle," "Nyansa," "Ralph Barker," "Uneeda," "Susie B.", "Corona," and "Suwanee," in addition to the "Thomas A. Edison." After 22 years of service the "Gray Eagle" went on the rocks in the Caloosahatchee and was abandoned. The machinery later was salvaged and acquired by Henry Ford who employed Conrad Menge to use it in building an old-style river steamboat for display at Dearborn, Mich.

The "Suwanee" was the favorite of Edison and he went on it for many trips up and down the river, explaining his latest inventions to his good friend Fred.

Menge later said that Edison one day asked him to ride in a boat of his own he had just built. "It was a pretty little thing," said Menge, "but there was no machinery of any kind in sight. I was amazed when we suddenly started off, without any vibration or the slightest noise. Later I learned that the power was being provided by a hundred Edison storage batteries concealed beneath the floor. Edison told me that all boats soon would be run from batteries. But later he wrote to me and said he figured out that it would take so many batteries to run a big ship that their weight would sink it. For once, Edison's idea wasn't practical."

#### *Fort Myers Finally Gets a Railroad*

Henry B. Plant, Florida railroad mogul, died suddenly on Wednesday, June 28, 1899.

Fort Myers did not fly its flags at half mast to mourn his passing. The gentleman with the courtly southern manners and sweeping mustache had never been a friend of Fort Myers and, consequently, the town did not grieve over his departure from this earth.

Leaders of Fort Myers had started pleading with him in 1886 when it was first learned that he intended to extend his Florida Southern southward from Bartow. But Plant turned a deaf ear to their pleas and built the railroad to Punta Gorda instead of to the Caloosahatchee.

After the Big Freeze, when the Caloosahatchee region began booming as it had never boomed before, Fort Myers people again appealed to Plant. On January 26, 1896, Vice-President D. F. Jack of the Plant System hinted that if Lee County would donate \$40,000 to the system the railroad might be provided. Said Jack: "I believe that Mr. Plant would entertain such a proposition as he has already acted favorably on such an inducement in Alabama."

But Lee County could not afford at that time to contribute \$40,000 to the wealthy Plant System, even though a railroad was needed badly.

Nothing could be done as long as the Plant System remained in the hands of Plant's handpicked subordinates. But on April 4, 1902, the vast holdings of the Plant System, valued at approximately \$25,000,000, were purchased by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. The properties included 2,139 miles of railroad tracks, two ocean steamship lines, three West Coast steamship lines, valuable hotels and sundry other gems.

Shortly after the purchase, Walter G. Langford, acting for a group of Fort Myers leaders, began writing to Coast Line officials. Late in July he was informed that P. F. Jenkins, construction engineer of the road, would come to Fort Myers and look the situation over. He arrived on July 30 and was taken everywhere by Fort Myers boosters who lauded the region to the skies. Favorably impressed, Jenkins made a favorable report to the Coast Line directors and then announced on August 3 that they would extend the line to Fort Myers and also build a spur up the river providing a right of way and a depot site would be furnished.

To obtain the land required, the town leaders organized Fort Myers' first Board of Trade at a meeting Friday afternoon, February 12, 1903, in the Royal Palm Hotel. Philip Isaacs was elected president; W. H. Towles, vice-president; J. E. Foxworthy, secretary, and Carl F. Roberts, treasurer. The directors named were: Harvie E. Heitman, R. A. Henderson, W. O. Rew, Joseph S. Shands, Frank C. Alderman, E. L. Evans, R. W. Gilliam, W. R. Washburn and George F. Ireland.

More than six months passed before all the land needed for the right of way could be secured. A few property owners held back, demanding prices considered exorbitant. They finally were induced to fall in line, however, and the last obstacle to the railroad construction was removed. Most of the land owners were public spirited and turned over needed land at reasonable prices. For the depot and wharf site at Monroe Street, the railroad paid Mrs. Evalina J. Gonzalez \$6,000.

Construction work was started the following winter when the necessary surveys were completed. G. S. Baxter & Co., a Jacksonville construction firm, began cutting the right-of-way at Punta Gorda March 13, 1903, and on the next day a Coast Line bridge crew arrived with a pile driver and started work on the bridge at Beautiful Island. Incidentally, the railroad surveyors announced that the Caloosahatchee was 7,125 feet wide directly in front of Fort Myers— $1\frac{3}{8}$  miles instead of  $1\frac{3}{4}$  as generally believed.

Fort Myers celebrated in a big way when the last tracks were laid on Saturday, February 20, 1904. The last rail went down at 11 a. m. at Monroe Street where the railroad dock was being built. The historic event was well reported in the Press.

"The large town flag was secured and Engine No. 499 was draped in the national colors," the Press related. "Then the young ladies hustled about and secured large bunches of flowers and soon had the headlight, flag standards and pilot of the engine bedecked with flowers. Mrs. Frier-

son and Mrs. James E. Hendry sent an immense and beautiful bouquet to F. L. Long and the other railroad men.

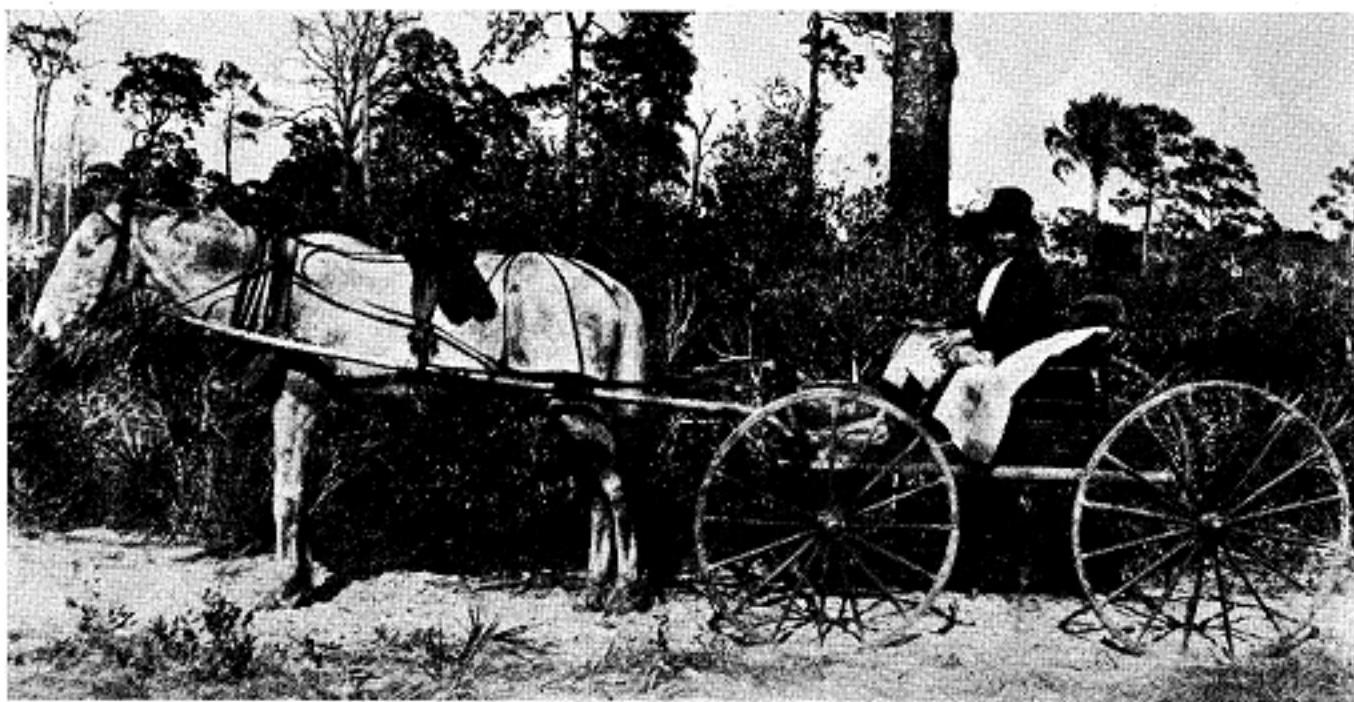
"Our people practically took control of the train as the work neared completion. Mrs. J. E. Foxworthy and the Misses Dot Stout and Bessie Thorpe held up the engineer. M. E. Moye took charge of the bell rope and whistle cord and kept the bell and whistle going. Col. E. L. Evans fired a salute with his brass cannon. Shortly after 11 a. m. the last rail slid from the flat car and was thrown into place.

"Then as the last spike was made ready, Mrs. James E. Hendry was escorted to the track, given a sledge hammer, and drove home the last spike that held the rails that connected Fort Myers with the great railroad system of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and the entire country.

"Then the crowd cheered, the cannon boomed, whistles blew and bells rang. Mrs. T. J. Evans had prepared a treat for the railroad men consisting of sandwiches, sausages, cookies, homemade candies, etc., while a box of 500 oranges, cigars and cheroots was furnished by the business men.

"Messrs. Long and Polk practically turned over the train to our people and all hands clambered on the engine, tender and flat cars and were given the first ride over the new railroad through Fort Myers and out to the county road crossing two miles east of the courthouse. Many on the train had never ridden on a railroad so the affair proved a proud and joyful event."

The first excursion out of Fort Myers was run to Punta Gorda on Thursday, April 7, 1904. No one paid any fares, everyone being guests of F. L. Long and E. B. Polk of the contracting firm which built the road. The trip, made by 187 persons, started from the north side of the river because the bridge had not been completed. The excursionists sat on



*Photo Courtesy of Mrs. Margaret Smith Furen*

This is the "pony express" used by the Whidden boys nearly a half century ago to carry mail from Fort Myers to Estero.

planks on three flat cars and in the caboose. Two hours were required to make the journey. At Punta Gorda the excursionists were met by a cornet band and escorted through the town.

The first regular passenger train arrived Tuesday, May 10, 1904. It consisted of three passenger coaches and two flat cars of lumber, consigned to Carl F. Roberts. About twenty-five passengers were on board, mostly railroad men. The train left at 3:15 p. m. for the north. Joseph Hadley bought the first ticket to go to Tice. Other passengers were Dr. John Hall and Dr. L. C. Washburn. The first shipment north consisted of eighty boxes of fruit sent by express by D. S. Borland, of Orange River. Agent H. A. Blake established headquarters in the old Gonzalez residence, setting up a temporary depot. Mail started coming by train on June 13.

The first excursion into Fort Myers arrived Monday, July 11. It brought 1,750 persons, one-fourth of whom were colored. The town was packed. Everyone was hungry, tired—and thirsty. There was a grand rush for the saloons, perhaps because most of the excursionists were from dry counties, De Soto and Polk. Lee County had voted wet again and Fort Myers had two saloons, run by Powell & Hawkins and Taff Langford. The bartenders almost dropped from exhaustion before the excursionists departed. But the Press reported that there was not much drunkenness, "considering the circumstances."

Because of the railroad, Fort Myers was almost swamped by circuses and stock companies during the following winter.

The Jones Model Plate Railroad Show was the first to arrive. It came on December 23 and pitched its tents on Guy Reynold's lot in Peck's Addition. Three exhibitions were given. But this circus didn't compare with the one which followed on the next day, John H. Spark's Old Reliable Virginia Shows which brought the first elephant ever seen in Fort Myers. In the parade the elephant was almost hidden by a huge advertisement on its back, paid for by Evans & Co. The circus also had a pair of lions, two trained seals, and a snarling leopard, and the youngsters were thrilled.

On the following day, Wednesday, the Sun Brothers Railroad Shows came to town with a big menagerie and "the finest parade on earth." And then, on Thursday, came the Miles Orton Dog & Pony Show. "This is almost too much," moaned the Press. "Fort Myers has never had a circus before and now we get them in bunches. It's too bad they couldn't have been strung out a little. We are being circused to death."

As if Fort Myers didn't have enough amusements, the Four Pickerts Stock Company came to town the same week as the four circuses. It played in Phoenix Hall and gave seven performances: "A Wife's Peril," "M'Liss," "Charlie's Aunt," "Police Alarm," "Little Lord Fauntleroy," "East Lynn," and "Ten Nights in a Bar Room." Old timers say that many theatre enthusiasts saw all the performances and wanted more. They got them when the Charles King Dramatic Company arrived January

23 and staged "A Southern Romance," "My Uncle from New York," and "Rip Van Winkle."

The arrival of the railroad was followed by a building boom, everyone having the utmost confidence in the future.

Two outstanding structures were erected in the business section: the Stone Block, on the southwest corner of First and Hendry, and the Bradford Hotel, diagonally across the intersection.

The Stone Block was built by Dr. B. P. Matheson, one of the most beloved physicians who ever practiced in Fort Myers. The building was artistically designed and was a real asset to the town.

The Bradford Hotel was built by Harvie E. Heitman and was financed by Mrs. Tootie McGregor, widow of Ambrose M. McGregor, who had befriended Heitman seven years before in his first building venture. The hotel was named the Bradford after Mrs. McGregor's deceased son who died September 8, 1902.

Work on the Bradford was started in August, 1904. To make way for it, the old, two-story frame building on the corner built in 1874 by Marion Hendry, was moved back to the rear of the lot after a large pecan tree, one of the landmarks of the town, was cut down to make room for it. The old Hendry home built in 1875 and still standing in 1948, was not disturbed. This structure, now weather-beaten and dilapidated, was once one of the show places of Fort Myers. It is the oldest building in town.

The Bradford, originally containing forty-one rooms with a large dining room on the second floor, was opened November 12, 1905. Charles G. Day was the first manager. The hotel was kept open throughout the year and was patronized by traveling men and tourists. Three additions to it were made later. Only the Hill House rivaled it in popularity and the Royal Palm in elegance.

#### *Public Improvements Are Started*

An upsurge in civic pride followed the coming of the railroad. This was best indicated by a sudden, strong public demand for better streets and sidewalks. The only sidewalks which then existed were made of shell and even those were few and far between. As for the streets, they existed in name only outside the business section. In most places they were only sandy trails.

A start was made toward improving downtown streets two years before the railroad came, but only after a hard fight.

A majority of the people wanted better streets but a potent minority, chronically opposed to higher taxes, strenuously objected to throwing the town into debt. And the streets could not be improved out of existing revenues—from all sources they did not amount to more than \$2,500 a year. The town was perpetually broke.

In an attempt to solve the thorny problem, the town fathers finally called for a vote on a proposed \$2,500 bond issue on April 15, 1901. Twenty-two citizens voted in favor of the bonds and only 14 against. But

it was defeated nevertheless. A two-thirds majority was required and the vote would have had to have been 24 to 12 instead of 22 to 14.

Irked by the defeat, the councilmen voted to buy 20,000 barrels of shell at 15 cents a barrel and to grade and shell First Street from Billy's Creek to Monroe and other streets in the downtown section. To pay the bills for labor and shell when they fell due, the councilmen borrowed money from the bank on their own personal notes. Property owners were to pay half the expense and the town the other half.

To get the shell needed, Indian mounds up and down the river, made by the Caloosas hundreds of years before, were leveled. But the shell served a noble purpose—Fort Myers began pulling itself out of the sand.

In the beginning, a strip only fifteen feet wide down the center of First Street was shelled. But this narrow strip was so "marvelously smooth" and such an improvement over the old sandy waste that the property owners immediately demanded that the entire street be covered. So did the owners of property elsewhere in the business section.

To pay the town's share of the expense, the councilmen signed notes totaling \$3,000. They did not get released from their obligation until years later. The officials who thus indebted themselves so the town could progress were: John C. Jeffcott, mayor, and Councilmen George F. Ireland, C. A. McDougald, G. W. Lightsey, Philip Isaacs, R. A. Henderson, Jehu J. Blount and J. L. Young.

The first "hard-surfaced" streets were completed just in time to provide a good "race track" for the first automobile Fort Myers ever saw, a large touring car which arrived Monday, April 11, 1904. It was owned by Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Bachman of Bradenton, who were accompanied by Capt. John and Mrs. Lewis, of Kansas. They had made the trip from Bradenton in less than fifteen hours of driving time. "A marvelous performance," declared the Press.

The Bachmans invited Captains Fred and Conrad Menge and Harvie E. Heitman for rides around town. Heitman said the next day that on the smooth stretch down First Street a speed of 18 miles an hour was attained. "We were literally flying along," he declared. Horses tied to hitching rails along the street reared up on their hind legs and snorted in fear as the car roared past. And the Press reported: "The way our people turned out and stared at this first auto was equal to the curiosity aroused by the coming of the railroad."

The movement to get "hard walks" for the business section was launched in the summer of 1904 by W. H. Towles, Harvie Heitman and George F. Ireland. They argued that the town was being disgraced by the shell walks which were constantly washing into the streets. The town should pay half the expense of concrete walks, they insisted, and the abutting property owners the other half.

Many citizens who would not benefit directly by the proposed sidewalk construction objected vehemently. They asked why they should pay for walks which would benefit only the business people, especially when things like schools, and a water works, and sewers, and a fire

department were needed so much more. The sidewalk advocates finally won their battle and most of the sidewalks downtown were "hardened" during 1906. They were paid for by a special sidewalk and street levy.

Most of the walks were laid by Manuel S. Gonzalez. His mark, "M.S.G.—1906" could still be seen in 1948 on the sidewalk in front of the county courthouse. The walk was still in first-class condition, proving that Gonzalez did not cheat in either materials or workmanship.

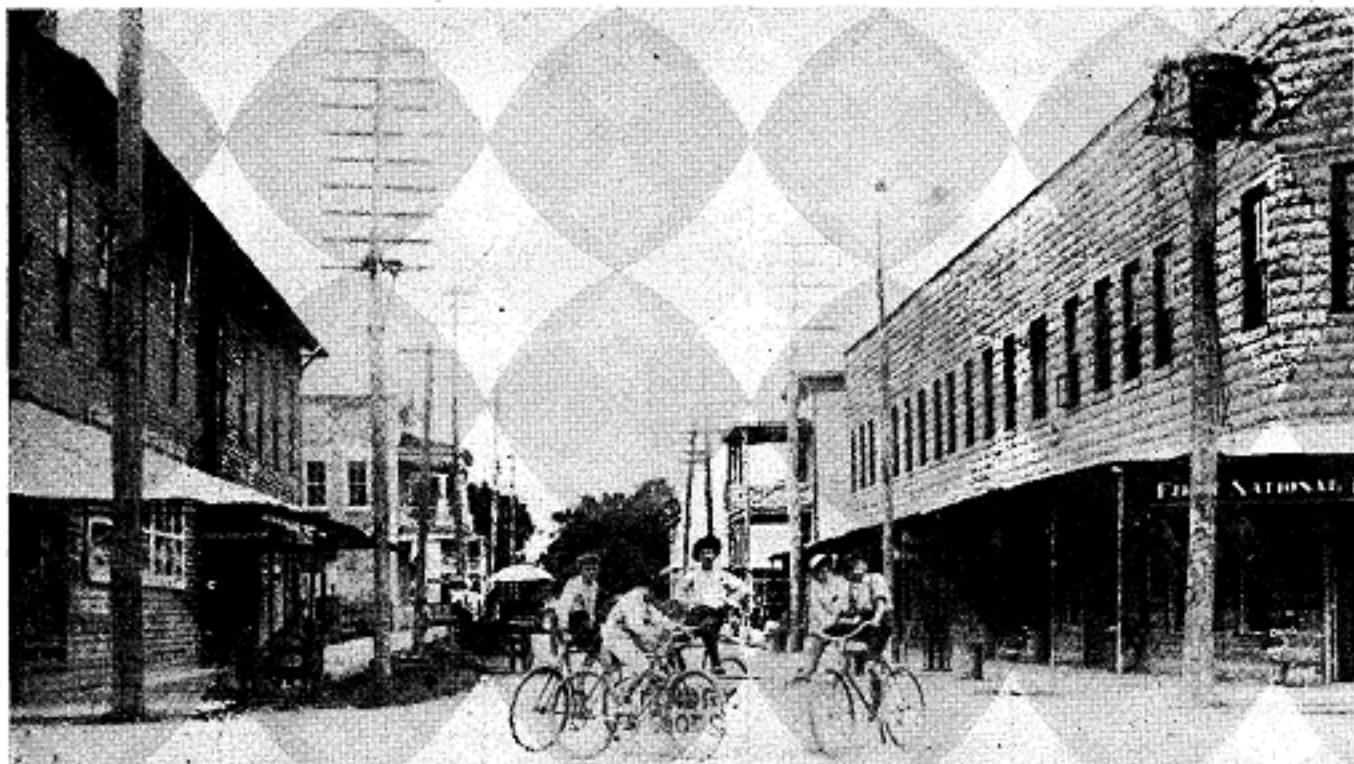
#### *Fort Myers Almost Goes Up in Smoke*

"A blaze, a hard wind, and beautiful Fort Myers, now the pride of South Florida, will be laid low, nothing but a heap of ashes."

So warned the Press early in 1900 but the warning went unheeded for more than a year. Nothing was done to provide fire protection of any kind until after Fort Myers had become badly scared.

On May 2, 1901, a home owned by Mrs. Carrie Bass and occupied by Dr. W. B. Winkler was completely destroyed by fire. Less than two weeks later, the home of Capt. Robert Lilly also was burned to the ground. The Baptist Church, nearby, was badly scorched and several houses were endangered. Both fires started in the daytime and were detected before they had gained much headway. But nothing could be done to stop them. Had a strong wind been blowing, the town would have been imperiled.

Realizing this, a group of town leaders called a mass meeting May 13 at Phoenix Hall. Almost every man in town attended. A volunteer fire department was organized with G. B. Reynolds as president; Frank C. Alderman, vice-president; Philip Isaacs, secretary-treasurer; Carl F. Roberts, captain, and C. F. Cates, first assistant.



*Photo Courtesy of R. V. Lee*

This was the heart of Fort Myers in 1908—looking south on Hendry from First. The building at the left is the famous Phoenix Hall and the building at the right is the Stone Block, now known as the Leon Building.

Citizens at the meeting insisted that enough money be raised to buy a hand fire engine, a hose cart, a hook and ladder, and all the helmets, buckets, axes and other equipment needed. More than \$500 was subscribed by those present. Within a month the total passed \$800—\$100 was received in a letter from Thomas A. Edison. Orders were given for equipment and on August 12 a second-hand fire engine, dubbed "Andrew Jackson," and 250 feet of hose were received from Bainbridge, Ga.

The volunteers started drilling and on Tuesday evening, September 4, a demonstration was held at First and Hendry in front of Evans & Co. store. All the fire laddies turned out, the fire engine was hooked up to a nearby well, the scaling ladder was raised to the roof of the Evans store, and the hand pumps were started. A stream of water began rising toward the roof—and then the hose burst. Spectators were drenched and a crowd of young ladies who had gathered in front of the post office laughed and laughed. The firemen sheepishly withdrew.

More than two years elapsed before the volunteer department was put to its first real test. On Friday, October 16, 1903, flames were seen coming from the roof of the Carl F. Roberts building at Hendry and Oak (Main), occupied by him as an undertaking establishment and wood-working shop. It also housed the equipment of the fire department. Mr. and Mrs. Roberts and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kellum lived upstairs.

As soon as the flames were seen the alarm was sounded and the volunteers responded. They succeeded in getting the equipment out of the blazing building and the pump was connected with the Roberts' well. But a valve stuck and no water could be pumped. A brisk south wind was blowing and the flames spread rapidly. Fire Chief Cates and others fought the blaze with fire extinguishers until the heat became so intense that they were driven back.

In a few minutes the flames leaped to the Verner store building, 75 feet away. The entire business section was in danger. Another alarm was sounded and men, women and children rushed downtown from all parts of town. They grabbed buckets and joined in the fight. The Heitman Livery Stable started blazing. Burning shingles soared high in the air and settled on roofs. They were beaten out with brooms but more kept on falling. T. O. Langford's home caught fire and also Gilliam's store building, Hopson's livery stable, and C. H. Braman's home. These fires were extinguished but then the south end of Evan's warehouse started blazing fiercely and the fire fighters were driven back. Merchants everywhere in the business district began removing their goods. The situation looked hopeless.

Then, at the last minute, the firemen succeeded in repairing the fire engine. It was taken to the river and the pumps started. A final stand was made. Women took the place of exhausted men at the pumps. They were tiring rapidly when help came. Members of the railroad construction crew working two miles east of town had seen the soaring smoke and came running in. They were breathless but took turns at manning the pump and a steady stream of water was kept pouring into the flames.

And then the wind began to die down. The fire was stopped—at the very edge of a row of wooden buildings. Had they caught fire, nothing could have saved the business section. It was the worst fire Fort Myers had ever had. The loss totalled more than \$10,000. Included among the women who helped in the fight were Mrs. Alice Tooke, Mrs. Stroup and daughters, Mrs. Oscar Lybass, and the Misses Bessie Thorpe, Laura Gonzalez, Flossie Hill, Josie Hendry and Lillian Gonzalez.

Not until more than a year and a half later did the town council feel Fort Myers could afford a gasoline fire engine. On June 14, 1905, the town-fathers plunged the town \$2,200 in debt and ordered a Watrous fire engine and 1,000 feet of hose from P. O. Herbert, of Atlanta, Ga., who agreed to accept payment in four annual installments at 6 per cent interest.

Unfortunately, the new fire engine could not be used to fight the next big fire in the Fort Myers area—the fire which destroyed the famous Shultz Hotel, at Punta Rassa, on Sunday morning, December 30, 1906.

The fire was discovered at 3 a. m. by a guest, Commodore Garrett Van Horn, of New York, who was awakened by choking smoke. Hearing the crackling of flames, he leaped out of bed and sounded the alarm. But the flames spread with lightning speed through the entire barnlike structure and the other guests and Shultz were forced to flee, leaving their belongings behind.

Nothing could be done to save the hotel and everything was destroyed—the main building, the warehouse, and even the wharf. Only a 30,000 gallon rain barrel was left standing and that was so badly warped that it was useless. Shultz had just completed improvements which cost him \$2,000. He estimated his loss at \$20,000. The ground and buildings were owned by the Western Union Telegraph Company although nearly everything had been built or improved by Shultz. Many boats stored under the building also were destroyed.

Work on a new hotel, financed in large part by wealthy sportsmen who had wintered with Shultz and stayed in "murderers' row," was started on September 19, 1907. The new hotel was two stories high, had forty rooms, all facing the water, and cost \$40,000. It was opened January 15, 1908. It weathered a bad hurricane on October 17, 1910, then it too was destroyed by fire late in 1913. No attempt to rebuild it was made.

The new fire equipment bought by Fort Myers more than paid for itself on April 15, 1907, when the three-story building at First and Lee owned by Carl F. Roberts caught fire. The two upper floors were ablaze when the firemen arrived and a strong northeast wind was blowing. But the volunteers, led by Harry Laycock, performed heroic work, and succeeded in preventing the flames from spreading to the nearby Hill House. Marshal Sanchez was overcome by smoke and several firemen suffered burns. But the fire was stopped. "Had it not been for the new equipment," said the Press, "the entire business section would have been destroyed."

*They Began Fighting with Banks*

Like almost every town, large or small, Fort Myers had its factional squabbles in its early days. And since Fort Myers was a rugged frontier cow town where the men were tough, two-fisted fighters, the squabbles often became quite acrimonious, to put it mildly.

The factional differences took a new turn almost immediately after the organization of Fort Myers' first home-owned bank, the Bank of Fort Myers. This institution, an outgrowth of the Fort Myers branch of the Citizens Bank & Trust Company, of Tampa, was founded in 1906.

The directors of the new bank included seven outstanding citizens: Harvie E. Heitman, James E. Hendry, Sr., Walter G. Langford, E. M. Hendry, George R. Shultz, R. A. Henderson, Sr., and James E. Foxworthy. Col. John Trice, of Tampa, president of the Tampa bank which had opened the Fort Myers branch, also was a director.

The new institution did not, unfortunately perhaps, include on its board of directors a number of other citizens who were equally outstanding but who belonged to "the other faction." They were deeply offended. Nothing might have come from their resentment, however, had it not been for the fact that the directorate included one man who had little use for two others on the board and those two had little use for him.

That man was Walter G. Langford. He was the 33-year-old son of Dr. Thomas E. Langford, one of the state's outstanding cattlemen, who had died in 1901. From his father Walter inherited considerable money and also much business ability. He used the money and the ability to increase his fortune.

Dr. Langford had been a close friend and long-time business associate of James E. Hendry, Sr. But Hendry and Dr. Langford's son could not see eye to eye on anything and soon parted company after the doctor's death. They became almost open enemies.

The other member of the board with whom young Langford was at odds was Harvie Heitman. When Heitman was chosen to serve as the active head of the new institution, Langford became disgruntled; so disgruntled that he almost immediately severed his connections with the infant institution.

Rounding up other worthy citizens who had chips on their shoulders, Langford straightway proceeded to organize another bank, the Lee County Bank, which soon got a national charter and changed its name in January, 1908, to the First National Bank of Fort Myers.

Associated with Langford in this second bank were William H. Towles, George F. Ireland, Dr. B. P. Matheson, W. S. Garvey, John T. Murphy, Edward Parkinson, C. C. Pursley, L. O. Benton, a Georgia capitalist, and John M. Roach, president of the Chicago Transit Company. Langford, of course, became president.

The First National took quarters in the newly-erected Stone Block on the southwest corner of First and Hendry, built by Dr. B. P. Matheson.

The Bank of Fort Myers had its quarters in the Heitman brick building close to the northwest corner of First and Jackson.

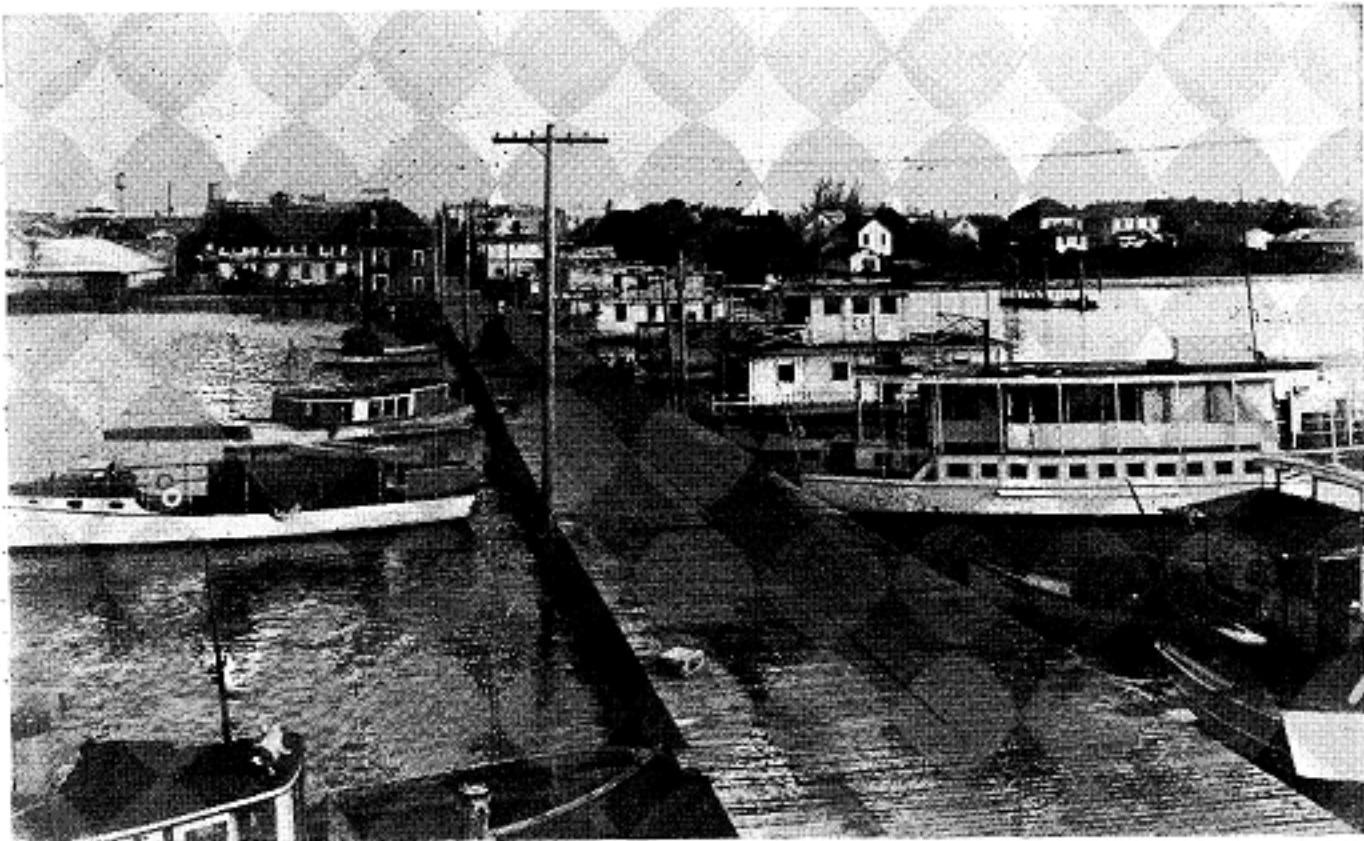
For the next decade, and perhaps a little longer, the two banks fought tooth and claw. Some old timers say that Fort Myers was benefited because it had two financial institutions which were at odds. They say that many loans were made which ordinarily would not have been considered in conformity with sound banking practice but which nevertheless helped to push the town ahead.

Other old timers believe, however, that because of the squabbling, the progress of Fort Myers was seriously retarded. They insist that when one of the institutions favored a public project, the other opposed it, just as a matter of principle, and that consequently the proposed project was killed. Because of this factionalism, they assert, Fort Myers was unable to form a strong Chamber of Commerce for many years.

The question of whether the town was helped or harmed because it had two banks in its formative days is of course debatable. The only thing known for sure is that each bank was headed by a strong, forceful public leader: Harvie E. Heitman, head of the Bank of Fort Myers, and Walter G. Langford, president of the First National. Both men left their marks on the city of Fort Myers.

#### *The Railroad Brings a New Industry*

When the first Coast Line train puffed over the bridge across the Caloosahatchee, an industry new to Fort Myers came into existence—the fish industry.



*Photo Courtesy of Capt. A. L. Kinzie*

Wharves along the river were busy places in days gone by. This picture shows the Hendry Street wharf as it looked in 1908.

Commercial fishing was the oldest industry of the West Coast, having been engaged in for at least two hundred years. In the early days, Spanish fishermen had their fish "ranchos" on the keys where they salt-cured their catches and shipped them to Cuban markets. In modern times, the industry became centered at ports with railroad connections, Cedar Keys first, Tampa later, and then, for the southwest coast, Punta Gorda.

The Punta Gorda fishermen truly made a killing and at the turn of the century were at the peak of their affluence. The fish were almost unbelievably plentiful and stupendous catches were made. On one trip a crew employed by the Bright Eye Fish Company, of Punta Gorda, caught 45,000 pounds of Spanish mackerel and 5,000 pounds of bonita. At another time two men, Emmet McKever and M. R. Goulding, brought in 100,000 pounds of mullet.

Capt. Fred Quednau, one-time mayor of Punta Gorda, told Author George W. Gatewood that one time he saw fifty acres of red fish off Cape Romano in about 25 feet of water. The fish were so numerous that those on the surface were lifted by those below, creating the appearance of a coral rock rising above the water, glittering as though afire.

The Punta Gorda fishermen often came into San Carlos Bay and into the lower waters of the Caloosahatchee. Their catches were tremendous and the Fort Myers Press, angrily contending that sport fishing was being ruined, insisted that illegal nets were being used. Sheriff Frank Tippins made many arrests and one time caught two fishermen with 5,791 fish in their boat. The nets they used were unquestionably longer than the law permitted and of smaller mesh. But the court and jury was sympathetic with the "poor" fishermen and they were acquitted.

It is possible that the Press might not have been so antagonistic to the commercial fishermen had they brought their catches to Fort Myers. But Fort Myers was not a fishing center then—it had no railroad by which the fish could be shipped to northern markets.

But with the arrival of the Coast Line, Fort Myers became a fish industry center almost overnight, not for salt water fish but for fresh water fish from Lake Okeechobee, famous for its catfish and bass.

The industry was started by Capt. B. F. Hall, Jr., owner of the small steamer "Naomi, III," who installed a large refrigerator in his boat and in December, 1904, began making semi-weekly trips to Lake Okeechobee where he kept a crew of men busy catching catfish. He paid them five cents a pound for all they caught; when the market was good he always managed to double his money, and more. To supply the ice needed for handling the catches, the Seminole Power & Ice Company doubled the capacity of its plant.

Early in 1906 Capt. T. A. Bass went into business with his newly-built steamer "Success" and on his first trip to Lake Okeechobee brought back 6,000 pounds. His boat had two refrigerators, one for scale fish and one for cats, with a total capacity of nearly five tons. The Press reported on November 2, 1911, that he was then shipping two solid cars

of catfish each week and that he employed 70 men and had sixteen boats on Lake Okeechobee.

The fresh fish industry brought much money and business into Fort Myers for more than a decade. After 1915, however, the industry declined, due to the fact that Flagler in that year built a railroad to the north shore of Lake Okeechobee, providing a much shorter route to the north. Wholesale fish companies of Fort Myers thereafter concentrated on shipping salt water fish.

### *Out on the Keys*

An almost dead industry in the Land of the Caloosahatchee was brought to life by the coming of the railroad into Fort Myers—the growing of fresh vegetables for outside markets.

The soil along the river was well adapted for vegetables and the climate was ideal. Nevertheless, Caloosahatchee vegetable growers could not compete with growers close to the railroad at Punta Gorda. They had to pay extra transportation charges which cut too deeply into their profits.

All this began to change with the arrival of the Coast Line. Prophesied the Press on May 19, 1904: "This is the beginning of vegetable growing—with a railroad to carry perishable goods quickly to market, the growing of vegetables and watermelons will become leading crops with our growers."

Years were to pass, however, before mainland growers caught up with growers out on the keys, on Sanibel and Captiva islands. The "key dwellers" had gained too much of a head start to be easily overtaken.

The first known settler of Sanibel was Capt. William H. Reed, of Portland, Me., commonly known as "the commodore," who went there with his son, William S. Reed, in 1887, and homesteaded. The son became postmaster of the island in 1895 and held that post for forty-four years.

Mr. and Mrs. Samuel B. Woodring, of Hazelton, Pa., homesteaded on Sanibel in 1888. Their daughter, Flora W., born January 25, 1889, was the first white child born on the island. On October 11, 1911, she was married to John E. Morris, of Cottersville, Ga., who went to Sanibel in 1896.

The first church and the first hotel on the island were built by Rev. George O. Barnes, of Kentucky, who homesteaded shortly after the Woodrings. His hotel, called the Casa Ybel, was long popular with tourists and sportsmen. Other first comers on the island included James Ashmore and his sister, Mrs. Matisha Nutt, of Kentucky; George Cooper, of Georgia, and George Fitzhugh, of Virginia. Henry Shanahan came in 1889 to take charge of the Sanibel lighthouse, at the west end of the island, and remained there until he died on June 8, 1913.

The coming of the Florida Southern to Punta Gorda put Sanibel on the map as one of the leading winter vegetable sections of the entire West Coast. The good soil and the rarity of frosts attracted settlers from

all parts of the country. Crops were shipped on the Plant steamers to Punta Gorda and from there were taken on the railroad to northern markets.

Leading vegetable growers on Sanibel during its heyday included Frank P., Ernest and Harry Bailey, John E. Morris, W. A. McIntyre, J. H. Johnson, R. L. Mitchell, John M. Boring, Rudolph C. Jenny, W. D. Swint, S. W. Richardson, Clarence Rutledge, Jessie Atkinson and W. F. Padgett. These growers shipped from the Matthews dock, run by the Bailey Bros., and from the dock owned by W. S. Doyle. Those who shipped from Wulfert, at the western end of the island, included J. J. Dinkins, Winn Hope, F. P. Henderson, Mason Dwight, T. H. Holloway, and L. A. Doane.

Two more hotels were established on the island in the early days: The Matthews, operated by Mrs. W. J. Matthews, and the Sanibel House, operated by Mrs. J. B. Daniels.

Sanibel had something besides fine climate and excellent bathing to attract winter visitors. It had beautiful shells. Running east to west instead of north and south, like all other West Coast keys, its beaches seemed to form a pocket on which countless numbers of shells were cast by every storm. It soon became famed as being the third finest shelling spot in the world and hundreds of shell hunters now go there very week during the shell "season" to find rare and beautiful specimens.

The first permanent settler on Captiva Island was William H. Binder, an Austrian by birth who had served many years as a sergeant in the United States Army. In search of a warm place to live he drifted southward and finally landed on Captiva where he homesteaded in 1886 and built the first house.

Binder one day in the late Eighties almost drowned because of a tarpon. The Silver King, a huge fellow, leaped into the sailboat while he was sailing peacefully along and began thrashing around. To save himself, Binder leaped into the water and his boat drifted away. Far from land, Binder yelled for help. His cries were heard a half mile away by Gordon Brainard and Arthur Gatewood. They sailed out and rescued him.

Gordon Brainard was the son of H. G. Brainard, one of the first homesteaders on Captiva, and his mother served as post mistress of the island for 37 years. Married a second time, she was known to everyone as Mrs. Hattie Gore. Other old timers on the island included John R. Dickey, John A. Frow, G. H. Ormsby, Dr. W. S. Turner, W. H. Knowles, George W. Carter, G. W. Bryant and Bernard Eyber. Mrs. Eyber and her son Richard ran the Captiva House, long famous among sportsmen and winter visitors.

Captiva and Sanibel were best known because of the winter vegetables grown upon them. Pine Island gained fame because of its citrus groves. Some of the old time citrus growers there were J. H.

Foster, P. C. Gill, Herman Hiltbrand, Capt. John Smith, W. E. Wilder, John Dampier, H. M. Stringfellow, J. K. Spicer, John Celec, and W. G. Masters. Henry Martin had the only store on the island in the early days. He also had an orange grove, a hotel and a dock.

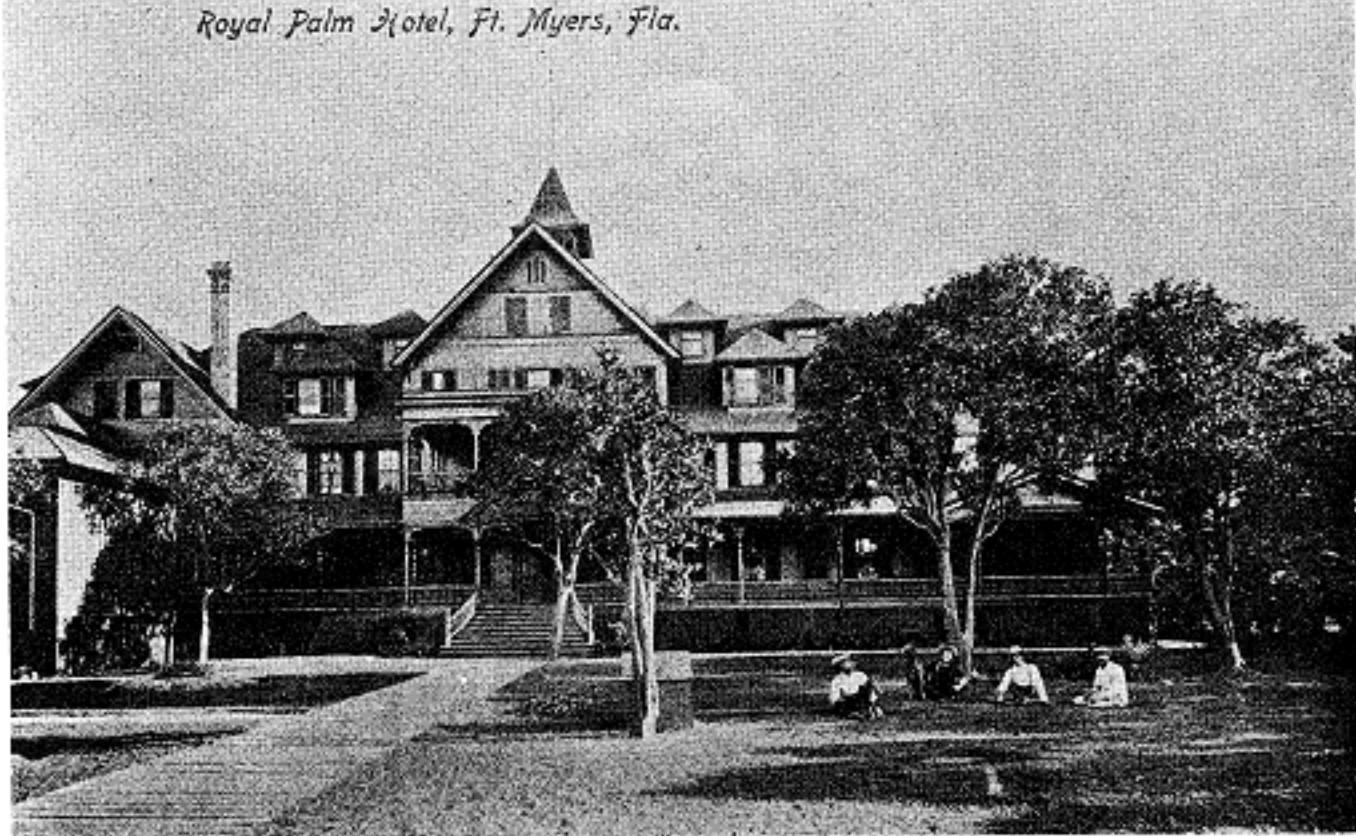
On the south end of the island St. James City was founded in January, 1886, by a group of men from Maine and Canada who organized the On-the-Gulf Company. Their object was to grow coconuts. They planted thousands of nuts but did not properly clear the ground and the nuts rotted. They also built the 50-room San Carlos Hotel and developed the townsite of St. James. When the coconut venture failed, the company failed and St. James reverted to the wilds. Only a few fishermen were left. The hotel was destroyed by fire on July 27, 1905.

In 1911, promoters from the Bahamas formed the Sisal Hemp and Development Company, set out many acres of plants which produce sisal fibre, and built a huge rope plant reported to have cost \$60,000. Several carloads of rope were made from sisal imported from the Bahamas—but for some unknown reason the company soon became insolvent.

But Pine Island continued to forge ahead because of its citrus groves.

Because of the islands off the mouth of the Caloosahatchee—Sanibel, Captiva and Pine—a steamer company was developed in Fort Myers by two men who for many years took leading parts in civic affairs, George A. and Andrew L. Kinzie, sons of an early pioneer.

*Royal Palm Hotel, Ft. Myers, Fla.*



*Photo Courtesy of Mrs. Harry Laycock*

The Royal Palm Hotel, built in 1898, helped immeasurably in transforming Fort Myers from a frontier "cow town" to a nationally known winter resort. This is one of the first pictures ever taken of the famous hostelry and shows the grounds as they looked before they were planted with hundreds of tropical and semi-tropical palms, trees and shrubs.

*Linking the Islands with the Mainland*

Reinhold Kinzie, a native of Eulau, Germany, came to America in 1879 in search of a place he could make his home. Hearing of the wonder land of Florida, he came to Fort Myers and soon afterward homesteaded near Olga. While working to prove up his claim, he became ill.

When his wife, back in Germany, learned of his illness she packed up and came to Florida with her three young sons, George, Andrew and Eric. They arrived in Fort Myers in April, 1887. Soon afterward the father died.

Growing to manhood, Eric went into the nursery business while George and Andrew followed the sea. At the turn of the century George was chief engineer of the "St. Lucie" while Andrew was the purser on the ship. Both had master mariners licenses.

When the Coast Line came into Fort Myers, the steamers "St. Lucie" and "Thomas A. Edison" were taken off the Fort Myers-Punta Gorda run. The "Edison" went back into the hands of the Menge brothers, who had chartered her to the railroad system, while the "St. Lucie" was sent to the Florida keys and used in the construction of the Key West railroad. She was destroyed in the hurricane of 1910.

The "St. Lucie" and the "Edison" had provided transportation service for the islands and also carried the mail. When they were withdrawn, the post office department awarded the mail contract to Capt. K. B. Harvey, owner of a 32-foot launch with a "modern" gasoline engine.

To carry out the contract, Harvey needed another boat and he chartered the "Belle of Myers" a small but sturdy steamer owned by George and Andrew Kinzie. They had used the boat to make runs to Punta Gorda and also to carry out fishing parties.

Harvey soon began having all sorts of trouble with his launch. The "modern" gasoline engine was continually breaking down. Almost every week he missed a trip or two. But the sturdy "Belle of Myers" always went through on schedule. As a result, the government finally took the mail contract away from Harvey and awarded it to the Kinzies. That was the real beginning of the Kinzie Brothers Steamer Line. The brothers bought the "Gladys" and a daily service was maintained to Sanibel, St. James, Captiva, Useppa, Pineland and Bokelia. Passengers, freight and express were carried as well as the mail.

Keeping pace with the development of the islands, the Kinzies later added the "Success," a paddle wheel steamer, to their line, also a new and larger "Gladys" and the "Dixie," probably the finest ship that ever plied the waters of the Caloosahatchee. A twin-screw steamer, the "Dixie" carried two hundred passengers and more than a thousand crates of vegetables.

At the peak of production on the islands, the Kinzie Line carried more than 150,000 crates of vegetables annually in addition to thousands of cases of fruit. Thus, the islanders were provided with dependable service and a connection with northern markets and the Captains Kinzie prospered.

## CHAPTER VI

### FROM PANIC THROUGH BOOMLET

JAMES E. FOXWORTHY was an able man. As cashier of the Bank of Fort Myers, and that institution's predecessor, he had long since won the reputation of knowing what to do in an emergency. But now he was stumped.

The money panic of 1907 was at its worst. Many banks throughout the country had failed and even the most solvent were hard pressed to meet demands for currency. The Bank of Fort Myers was sound financially but its vault had been almost stripped of cash. And here was a depositor who wanted more than a thousand dollars—\$1,357.56, to be exact—his entire deposit in the bank.

Foxworthy was in a predicament. If he gave the depositor the money he wanted, the bank's cash reserve would be wiped out. But if he turned him down, the results would be catastrophic. The bank would have to close its doors.

The cashier tried his best not to appear perturbed. He started talking about the weather, about politics, about anything he could think of. All the time he was trying to decide what course to follow. Finally he came to a conclusion. Come what may, he would give the depositor his money. Then he would pray!

Going to the vault, Foxworthy counted out \$1,357.56 and nonchalantly handed it over, just as though the bank's supply of money was unlimited. Then he went to the phone, called James E. Hendry, Sr., and Harvie E. Heitman and told them what had happened. They scurried around, got money from their friends, and soon brought in enough to meet all demands.

That was the closest Fort Myers came to being dealt a grievous blow by the panic of 1907. In fact, the financial storm blew over before most people in Fort Myers knew there had been one. The only other effect of the panic locally was a change of ownership of the Royal Palm Hotel and that helped Fort Myers instead of harming it.

Following the death in 1902 of Hugh O'Neill, builder of the hotel, the Royal Palm had been sold for a fraction of its real worth to William H. Towles, on March 20, 1903. A year later he sold it to Rev. Dr. C. Harvey Hartman, of Dover, N. J., for \$25,000. Dr. Hartman bought adjoining property owned by S. C. Bass, built an addition to the hotel, and made numerous improvements.

All this cost Dr. Hartman heavily, and when the panic of 1907 set in he found himself over-extended. He could not raise enough money to

meet his obligations and wasn't even able to reopen the hotel. In this emergency, a good friend of Fort Myers came to his rescue—the widow of Ambrose M. McGregor.

Five years after the death of her husband, Mrs. Tootie McGregor was married to Dr. M. O. Terry, of Utica, N. Y., a physician who had served as surgeon general of the United States Army during the Spanish-American War. The ceremony was performed December 12, 1905.

Having been the sole beneficiary of her first husband, Mrs. Terry was wealthy and probably had more money invested in Lee County than any other person. She was the owner of two large groves, many scattered tracts, and had financed Harvie E. Heitman in the construction of business buildings and the Bradford Hotel, named for her son. She had too much at stake in Fort Myers to see the Royal Palm Hotel closed so she bought out Dr. Hartman, on January 26, 1907.

To show her faith in the town, Mrs. Terry soon afterward built a 50-room addition to the hotel and spent a small fortune on improvements.

Dr. and Mrs. Terry then took the lead in boosting for a public improvement which had long been sorely needed—the construction of seawalls along the waterfront. A carefully worked out plan for building the seawalls and constructing a waterfront boulevard as well was presented to the public by Dr. Terry at a mass meeting in the courthouse April 7, 1907.

The plan provided for the construction of seawalls about two hundred feet out from the then existing river bank all the way from Monroe Street to Billy's Creek. This would give waterfront property owners considerably more land, after necessary fills were made, than they had before. But a strip about seventy-five feet wide all along the river would be deeded to the city for a boulevard. The total cost would be \$25,000. The property owners would pay \$18,000, Dr. Terry said, and the city should pay \$7,000. He advocated a bond issue to take care of the city's portion of the expense.

All this seemed most acceptable to those present at the meeting. It meant that the dirty, litter-and-rubbish-strewn waterfront, with its decaying hyacinths and stinking sewage, and its rickety old wharves and boathouses, soon would become a thing of the past. And the idea of a waterfront boulevard seemed most laudable. It appeared as though the plan certainly would be adopted.

But snags soon developed. When owners of the fine homes east of Fowler had time to mull over the proposal, they rejected it flatly. They never would agree to having a boulevard separating them from the river, ruining their gardens and taking away their private boat landings. They threatened to fight the plan to a finish.

Even owners of waterfront property in the downtown section opposed the boulevard feature of the plan. It would rob them of riparian rights they considered priceless. So the boulevard idea died a'borning. And so did the thought of public participation in the program.

After months of discussion, the waterfront property owners agreed to have the seawalls built at their own expense. A waterfront association was formed with Harvie E. Heitman as treasurer. Permission to proceed was obtained from the town council and Contractor Herbert Sewall was awarded a contract to build the walls at \$3.50 a foot.

Work was started April 10, 1908, in front of the Royal Palm Hotel. While a seven-shot salute was being fired on the yacht "Whim," Mrs. Terry drove the first piling. Speakers at the ceremony included Mayor Louis A. Hendry, William H. Towles and Peter A. Ruhl, editor of the Press.

The cost of the seawalls was apportioned as follows: Heitman & McGregor, \$3,860; H. E. Heitman, \$2,055; Joseph Vivas, \$1,272; Royal Palm Hotel and Dr. C. H. Hartman, \$2,280; S. C. Bass, \$1,875; John T. Murphy, \$1,719; D. A. G. Floweree, \$1,590; Hugh McDonald, Jr., \$1,362; Mrs. W. C. Barnes, \$1,320; Dr. Franklin Miles, \$825; W. G. Langford and Gilmer M. Heitman, \$1,250, and John M. Dean, \$3,804.

More than four years were required to complete the project and lift Fort Myers' face out of the mud—but lifted it was, eventually.

#### *Fort Myers Becomes the City of Palms*

An Irish merchant prince of New York, Hugh O'Neill, planted the first royal palms in Fort Myers. But Fort Myers ultimately became the City of Palms because of Thomas A. Edison, the electrical wizard.

O'Neill planted the first royals in the grounds of the hotel he built in 1897. Their growth was amazingly rapid and they became majestically beautiful. They were such an attraction that the name of the hotel soon was changed from the Fort Myers Hotel to the Royal Palm. And when a street terminating at the hotel was opened between First and Second, it was called Royal Palm Avenue because of the splendid view of the hotel palms which could be seen from anywhere along its length.

No person in Fort Myers was more of an admirer of the beautiful royals than Edison. They struck his eye immediately after he returned to his Fort Myers winter home in 1901 after a long absence. He often talked about them, saying they should be planted all over town.

To give substance to his suggestion, Edison on April 4, 1907, offered to plant royals on Riverside Avenue (now McGregor Boulevard) all the way from Monroe Street to Manuel's Branch. He told the town council he would stand all the expense of bringing the palms in, planting them and caring for them for two years providing the town would agree to care for them thereafter. His offer was accepted by the council on April 16.

Immediately afterward Edison made a contract with W. T. Hull, of LaBelle, and W. H. Towles to bring the palms from Cuba. Hull and his

son Perry left for the island on May 22 and bought 1,100. Towles was just getting ready to send the steamer "Lykes" after them when there was a yellow fever scare in Cuba and a quarantine was clamped on. Most of the palms died.

Hull and Towles then bought 700 palms from E. E. Goodno who got them out of the Big Cypress. They also died. Towles and Hull next bought 1,300 more in Cuba and this time the shipment came through, Capt. Nick Armeda bringing them on the steamer "Mildred." They were planted and enough lived to enable Towles and Hull to fulfill their contract. Towles stated later, in a letter printed in the Press on September 7, 1911, that he had lost \$2,493.55 on the deal.

Unfortunately, Fort Myers failed to take care of the palms after the two-year period as it had agreed to do and many of them died from neglect. James E. Hendry, Jr., Edward L. Evans and William Jeffcott repeatedly appealed to the city council to make some provision for giving the palms the attention they deserved but their pleas were disregarded.

To replace those which had died, Edison bought 250 in March, 1913, from the Royal Palm Nurseries at Oneco and in August, 1914, donated 178 more. In October of the same year residents on Second Street set out royals at their own expense.

Finally, on June 11, 1915, the city appointed its first park commission. Hendry, Evans and Jeffcott were named to serve. As their first order of business they sprayed and fertilized the palms which had survived the neglect and they also spent \$1,000 which the city appropriated for "city beautification." Some of the money went for more royals which were planted on First between Jackson and Billy's Creek and some of it for eucalyptus trees for other residential streets.

Then came World War I and the royals were forgotten for a while.

#### *Fort Myers Goes Hog Wild*

Fort Myers was twenty-four years old, as an incorporated town, before it ceased to advertise itself as a "cow town" by permitting cattle to roam through the streets.

Repeated efforts were made to "kick the cattle out" but for many long years all such moves were blocked by the cattle barons, then masters of the community. They wanted no restrictions placed on the movement of cattle, not even in the town they called their home.

The first "anti-cattle-roaming" ordinance was passed by the town council on September 25, 1886, as a result of prodding by young Peter O. Knight, the second Fort Myers mayor. The ordinance bluntly stated all cattle except "gentle milk cows" must be kept out of the town limits thereafter. But the cattle barons raised such an anguished cry that the ordinance was repealed two weeks later.

Editor Frank Stout of the Press for a time fought valiantly for re-enactment of the ordinance. In July, 1887, he lamented: "We want a

court house, we want hotels, we want improvements of all kinds. But what encouragement is it to a person to buy and improve his property when he awakes in the morning to find his yard a mass of filth and torn up by the feet of cattle that find a pasturage in our public streets and yards?"

But Editor Stout had to give up the fight. The cattle owners were too strong for him. They also were too strong for anti-cow men who managed to get elected to the council; the cattle men always succeeded in getting enough friends on the council to block all anti-cow proposals.

The time came, however, when the cattle barons and their friends lost their potent influence. The town council on September 4, 1908, took the bull by the horns, or the cow by the tail, and sternly ordered that all cattle, gentle milk cows as well as others, be penned up. From New York Dr. Terry wrote: "I am delighted beyond expression." So were hundreds of other Fort Myers boosters.

Marshal S. W. Sanchez followed the council's order to the letter. A cow pen was provided at the edge of town where wandering cattle were impounded until their owners claimed them—and paid a fine. But in his zeal, the marshal rounded up too many milk cows owned by the residents of the town and on February 9, 1909, seventy-five of them presented a petition to council demanding that milk cows be left unmolested.

Hearkening to the public clamor, the councilmen told the marshal to go a little easier. But when Robert Lilly was elected mayor the following August he announced that the cow ordinance would be strictly



FIRST STREET FEB. 1909

*Photo Courtesy of Henry Bartley*

First Street, looking east from Hendry, in 1909. The frame buildings at the right were razed during the 'Teens to make way for more modern buildings.

enforced and instructed Sanchez to arrest all offenders "regardless of who they may be."

His order was obeyed—and the era of cow supremacy ended in Fort Myers.

But the good people of Fort Myers continued to have trouble with hogs—plenty of trouble. Settlers along the Caloosahatchee who were trying to raise vegetables for northern markets had even more. So did grove owners. They finally went plumb "hog wild" and early in 1909 some 250 of them signed a petition demanding that the state legislature pass a law to compel the owners to keep their hogs penned in. They persuaded Dr. Terry to go to Tallahassee to be their spokesman.

Dr. Terry went but he had no success. The Lee County representative in the legislature, F. J. Wilson, didn't vote against the measure but he refused to support it and by his actions showed he was against it. The proposed law never had a chance of passing.

Returning to Fort Myers, Dr. Terry wrote a blistering letter which was printed in the Press. He blamed Wilson for having killed the measure and declared that Wilson had "disregarded the interests of 250 of the best citizens of Lee County."

Replied D. C. Hiers in the next issue of the Press: "Terry doesn't know what he is talking about. Mr. Wilson is for the masses of the people. I think Terry is after some future office. Watch him, boys. He has killed himself already and ought to be buried before he kicks up another stink in the county."

Edward Parkinson replied to Hiers. He pointed out that only 98 hogs were listed for taxation in the entire county and insisted that the opponents of the measure who let their hogs run wild were guilty of swearing falsely as to their personal property. "If they are so interested in the piney woods rooters why don't they pay their taxes on the hogs they own? Industrious citizens who clear and cultivate their lands have to pay taxes—why don't the hog owners?"

L. J. Adams chimed in: "I spent \$100 on a fence to keep out a drove of skinny hogs not worth \$10. And after that they came and lived under my house. The critters rooted underneath it and climbed over the top. They got through holes no bigger than a knot hole. They were owned by a squatter who doesn't do a lick of work and has nothing except six children, three dogs, the pigs which eat my crops—and a vote. I guess that's all that counts—the vote!"

Adams was right. It was the hog owner's vote that counted. Years more were to pass before owners were compelled to keep their hogs penned up out in the country. But in Fort Myers it was a different story. Before Mayor Lilly's term expired he ordered Marshal Sanchez to shoot wandering hogs on sight and thereafter few of them were seen within the town limits.

Lilly got rid of both the wandering cows and the wandering hogs—a monument should be erected in his honor.

*Country Club—Prohibition—Movies—Devil Wagons—Cemetery*

A hodgepodge of unrelated events occurred in Fort Myers during 1908 but they all had an important bearing on the history of the town.

During that year Fort Myers got its first country club. Prohibition came for keeps and saloons closed their doors "forever." The first moving picture theatre was opened. The first home-owned "devil wagons" snorted around town and, appropriately enough, the Fort Myers Cemetery was improved—and enlarged.

The country club was a long time coming. Ambrose M. McGregor donated an acre on the river in East Fort Myers in 1897 to a Fort Myers Country Club but the proposed club breathed a few gasps and then expired, leaving no trace of its existence except a recorded deed for the clubhouse site in the county records.

Dr. C. H. Hartman, owner of the Royal Palm Hotel, revived the country club idea in 1904 following the arrival of the Coast Line. He insisted that a clubhouse and golf course would have to be provided if Fort Myers hoped to attract sports-loving winter visitors.

Agreeing with Dr. Hartman, Mrs. M. O. Terry, widow of McGregor, donated a tract of nearly forty acres in East Fort Myers to the Fort Myers Yacht and Country Club, formally organized on April 26, 1906. A drive was launched to sell club memberships at \$100 each and by May 17, 1907, enough money had been pledged to award a contract to Manuel S. Gonzalez to build a clubhouse to cost \$2,500. Work on a golf course was started at the same time.

The clubhouse was formally opened Friday, February 21, 1908, a special train being run from Fort Myers to transport the club members and the invited guests. The event had been planned for weeks but it turned out dismally. The day was cold and cloudy, the clubhouse was only partly furnished, the golf course was nothing but a sand waste, and there was nothing for the members and their guests to do except watch a trapshooting contest. Everyone went back home as soon as possible.

Officers of the club at that time were: Dr. M. O. Terry, president; Harvie E. Heitman, vice-president; H. A. Hendry, treasurer, and Frank C. Alderman, secretary. Members included: Robert Dean, G. B. Reynolds, Hugh MacDonald, Jr., C. B. Yarbrough, F. T. McNulty, James E. Hendry, Jr., John M. Dean, E. L. Evans, J. J. Woolf, Dr. A. P. Hunter, Dr. Franklin Miles, J. E. Foxworthy, C. A. Dean, R. B. Leak, W. S. Garvey, W. R. Woodward, Don Register and W. W. Stone.

The infant club died a lingering death. Members could not get to the clubhouse except by horse and buggy and the roads were so bad that the trip required more than an hour each way. Only the strongest bicycle riders could plow through the clutching sand. Consequently, the club members soon lost interest in the project and the golf course was never completed.

The next event of 1908—prohibition—had more enduring effects. The wet and dry forces had been at swords points for years, ever since

the first wet-or-dry election in 1887. First one side won and then the other. The W. C. T. U. won a smashing victory in 1898. During the preceding two years there had been many drunken brawls and one killing in which John Barleycorn participated and the prohibitionists insisted that the town's crime problems would be solved only by closing the saloon. Their arguments were effective and the drys won 147 to 92 and Taff Langford's saloon was forced to close on October 1.

Two years later the wets got revenge. They pointed out that there had been as much crime during the dry era as there had been before, and that no one had benefited except Old Bill Clay, moonshiner extraordinary, who had reopened his blind tiger. At an election on August 1, the wets won, scoring a 158 to 77 victory, and two saloons were opened.

They remained open eight years. But in 1908 the W. C. T. U. brought in a famous personage to dry up Fort Myers "forever"—the one and only Carrie Nation. The nationally known, hatchet-swinging, saloon-buster-upper came to town on February 22 and was given a resounding welcome by the dry forces. She talked in the churches and she talked on the courthouse steps. She didn't smash any saloons but she did succeed in so swaying public sentiment that on July 1 the prohibitionists succeeded in winning, 360 to 269. On September 1, the saloons closed their doors for the last time until after the repeal of the 18th amendment, twenty-six years later. During that long interval no liquor was sold in Fort Myers—except by bootleggers.

As if to give the town some relief from its unaccustomed dryness, the town fathers in October ordered another artesian well dug by William Sini. He drilled at the corner of Second and Park and struck a 500-gallon-a-minute underground stream at 608 feet.

On September 3, 1908, Fort Myers got its first moving picture theatre. Prior to that time, movies had been shown by traveling exhibitors and by several organizations but no regular movie theatre had been opened. Now, however, the town was promised "the very latest films" by John Towles Hendry in a movie "palace" in a two-story frame building on First between Hendry and Jackson. The "palace" was an empty store room and the seats were wooden benches.

Hendry installed an Edison moving picture machine, imported an operator from Tampa and opened his theatre with the stirring, nerve-tingling "Western Romance" flashed on the screen in what the Press described as a "most lifelike manner." Music was furnished by Mrs. Hendry. At the ticket window was Anna Belle Boyd who, the Press reported, greeted the movie-goers "in a most friendly manner."

In November, Owner Hendry splurged and added a Victor Talking Machine to his equipment to furnish the words and music for illustrated songs. But Mrs. Hendry was not thrown out of her job by the talking machine. She continued to furnish pulse-throbbing music for the flickers.

Late in September, 1908, a high-wheeled Oldsmobile "devil wagon" was brought into town by Dr. Albert Newman, a winter visitor. The contraption broke down a few days later and Dr. Newman sold it to Gilmer

M. Heitman. Heitman fussed and fumed with it for weeks and then became disgusted and sold it to Ben King, the only man in southwest Florida who knew how to make the darn thing run.

A terrifying, four-cylinder Acme which roared along at 15 miles an hour, emitting clouds of blue smoke and back-firing with explosions which scattered the cattle for miles around, was brought in during the fall by W. S. Garvey. The Southern Land & Improvement Company also imported a Thomas Flyer which was used by George R. Lynn, Sr., to carry real estate prospects to Citrus Center.

Honk-honks really began taking over the town in April, 1909. Gilmer Heitman brought in six Reos, all painted red. Three were touring cars and three runabouts. The touring cars were bought by W. H. Towles, E. J. Blount and C. B. Yarbrough. Mrs. J. E. Foxworthy bought one of the runabouts, thereby becoming the first woman auto owner in Fort Myers. G. B. Reynolds bought another runabout and Heitman kept the third.

On May 31, 1909, the first two Cadillacs were brought in by Heitman. They were four cylinders and guaranteed to go forty miles an hour. One was sold to James E. Hendry, Sr., and the other to Towles who then sold his Reo to Mrs. E. L. Evans. On the same day, May 31, the first car arrived by road from Tampa. It was a Rambler, driven by Ben King and Hal Frierson who reported they had made the trip with only four blowouts.

King gets the credit for establishing the first garage in Fort Myers. A former electrician at the Seminole Power & Ice Company, he was a wizard with all kinds of mechanical devices and soon acquired the knack



Sanibel Island is world-famous for its beautiful shells and the beaches are combed daily by tourists and commercial shell gatherers.

of repairing all makes of autos. He owned a marine ways and machine shop at the end of the Hendry Street dock but many car owners, particularly women, were afraid to run their cars out to his place, so he set up a garage on Jackson Street. Old timers say their cars were in King's garage almost as much of the time as they were on the road.

Despite the execrable roads which then plagued motorists, the number of car owners slowly increased. Several agencies were opened. One of the first was a Ford agency. And one of the first customers of the Ford establishment was the famous Henry Ford himself.

The motor king came to Fort Myers in February, 1914, accompanied by John Burroughs, the noted writer and naturalist, to visit Edison. Before he left Detroit he sent an order to the Fort Myers Ford dealer to have three "Tin Lizzies" ready for him on his arrival. Ford and Burroughs came in on Monday, February 23, and were greeted by a crowd of more than two thousand persons. They were escorted to the Edison home by every automobile owner in town—all 31 of them. The parade was headed by the three Fords Henry had ordered. He gave one of them to Edison, the second to Burroughs, and kept the third for his own use. For many, many years thereafter he drove the car around Fort Myers whenever he came to town. He was asked often why he didn't replace it with a newer model and always replied: "Shucks, why should I? A Ford never wears out."

Perhaps foreseeing the day when automobiles would be "mowing 'em down" in Fort Myers, Carl F. Roberts in 1908 decided that something should be done about Fort Myers' down-at-the-heels cemetery. He said it was a disgrace to the community—and it was.

The first cemetery in Fort Myers was opened by the Hendry family during the 1870's. It was located far out in the country near the edge of Billy's Creek at what is now Henderson Avenue, south of the present cemetery. Members of the Hendry family and their kinfolk have been buried there ever since.

To provide a cemetery for the public, the Fort Myers Cemetery Company was organized in 1886 by Capt. F. A. Hendry, W. P. Gardner, W. M. Hendry, T. E. Langford and J. J. Blount. A forty-acre tract at the present location was purchased from Major James Evans for \$50 and town residents began making burials there.

Practically nothing was done to improve the cemetery, however, until 1908 when Roberts, owner of the town's only funeral establishment, began criticising its appearance. Incorporators of the company then living appointed him as their agent. Under his direction, the entire plot was grubbed and cleared, driveways were graded, a concrete fence was erected, the plot was re-surveyed, and stakes set at all lot corners, and a large map was drawn to show the location of every grave.

To pay for the improvements, Roberts was authorized by the company incorporators to levy assessments against the lot owners. Some of them paid but many of them didn't. By the end of 1910 Roberts found he had spent \$836 more than he had received, so he decided he would let

somebody else do the work. The Woman's Civic Club undertook the maintenance task and during 1912 gave entertainments of all kinds to raise money.

While Roberts was working hard in 1908 to beautify the cemetery, a nationally famous man died in Lee County who had no intention of ever being buried in Lee County ground, or anywhere else, because he was "immortal." That man was Dr. Cyrus R. Teed, the one and only "Koresh."

### *The Rise and Fall of New Jerusalem*

Few motorists who drive today through the picturesque little hamlet of Estero realize that it once was the site of one of the world's strangest, most grandiose, weirdest communistic developments—New Jerusalem, whose inhabitants thought they lived inside the earth.

The founder of New Jerusalem was Dr. Cyrus R. Teed, described in the Chicago Herald in April, 1894, as "an undersized, smooth shaven man of 54 whose brown, restless eyes glow and burn like live coals. He directs the destinies of a 'new race of men,' the 'sons of God.' He exerts a strange, mesmerizing influence over his converts, particularly the other sex."

Teed was variously termed a religious fanatic or a fraud of top rank. Whatever he was, he won converts—and all their earthly possessions.

Born on a farm in Delaware County, New York, on October 18, 1839, Teed became an ardent Baptist early in life, like all his ancestors. He studied medicine with an uncle in Utica and later entered the New York Electric Medical College. During the Civil War he served in some kind of a medical corps.

In 1870, Dr. Teed "discovered" what he called "cellular cosmogony"—to most people an incomprehensible jumble of scientific, sociological and philosophical balderdash. Among other things, the learned doctor preached that the earth is a hollow sphere, 7,000 miles in diameter, and that the sun and moon and stars are all inside this sphere; along with all living and growing things.

Dr. Teed was first heard of publicly in Chicago in 1886 where he founded "The College of Life" and began to promulgate his doctrines. He soon had a flock of followers who gave up their family ties and all their possessions. He named his organization the "Society Arch Triumphant" and proclaimed himself "Cyrus, the Messenger," a composite of Christ, Buddha and all other Messiahs.

Deciding that the name "Cyrus" was not impressive enough, Dr. Teed later adopted the Hebrew equivalent of Cyrus—"Koresh." And he called his organization the Koreshan Unity.

The Chicago Herald reported that in April, 1894, Koresh had 4,000 followers and had collected \$60,000 in California alone. The first haven for his converts was at Washington Heights, near Chicago. Three out of four of his members were women. All money taken in went to the Koreshan Unity and the expenditure of it was supposed to be handled by twenty-five trustees—but the Herald said it wasn't.

"Dr. Teed is the absolute, irresponsible, immaculate and inviolate high muck-a-muck if there ever was one," said the Herald. "He is addressed with awe and trembling. . . . Neither his acts nor his motives are inquired into and his word is law—the only law."

Early in the 1890's Dr. Teed announced to his followers that the Lord had instructed him to go to Florida and establish a home for the Koreshans at Estero where Gustav Damkoehler had given him 300 acres of fine land and where he had bought 1,000 acres more with Koreshan funds. He said that the Florida home of the Koreshans was to be called New Jerusalem.

The Koreshan holdings were surveyed during the winter of 1893-94 and New Jerusalem was platted, with streets 400 feet in width, marvelous parks, and an area large enough to accommodate 8,000,000 Koreshans!

Thirty colonists were sent to Estero during that same winter and erected a few cottages and other small buildings. The main building program started the following year. A sawmill was put in operation and huge frame dormitories were erected, one for the men and one for the women, because, being celibates, husbands and wives were to live separately. A huge dining hall also was constructed, along with a print shop and many other structures.

Dr. Teed never approached his goal of 8,000,000 followers who wanted to inhabit New Jerusalem. Actually, only two hundred decided to live celibate lives and turn over everything they had to Dr. Teed's care. Many of those who did, later regretted their decision. Time and again the Fort Myers Press carried stories about Koreshans who had left the colony after trying in vain to get their money back. The paper also carried stories about Koreshans committing suicide.

The Press condemned Koresh unmercifully and so did newspapers throughout the country. For instance, the Tallahassee Sun said March 16, 1907: "Teed is not the first rascal who has made religion a cloak for his designs against the property and personal liberty of others. But he is the only one now allowed to do business in the state."

During 1908 the nation's press began bearing down on Teed harder than ever. Many newspapers sent correspondents to Estero to investigate his colony. Teed said he was being "crucified." The newspapers bore down more. And then Teed died—on Tuesday, December 22, 1908.

All activities at New Jerusalem were halted. No one talked above a whisper. He had told his followers that he was immortal; that after his "physical death" he would rise again, and ascend to Heaven, and that all the faithful would go with him. Everyone prayed. A constant watch was kept over his body. After two days his followers began having horrible suspicions. The body of their beloved messiah was beginning to decay—and give forth noisome odors. And then, after four days, Dr. William Hanson, acting health officer of Lee County, appeared in New Jerusalem and issued orders that Koresh be buried forthwith.

Reluctantly and sorrowfully, the Koreshans heeded the demand. They secured a bathtub, put the body of Koresh into it and placed it in a brick reinforced concrete tomb at the end of Estero Island. There it re-

mained, year after year, until the great hurricane of October 25, 1921. Waves swept over the island and when the storm died down, the tomb of Koresh was gone. Not a trace of his remains was ever found.

A few of Teed's zealous followers continued to carry on the colony after his death. They farmed and they fished, and lived exemplary lives. Their newspaper, the American Eagle, edited by Allen Andrews, became one of the best horticultural papers in the country. But the number of Koreshans steadily dwindled. By late 1947, when they began fighting among themselves and engaging in a lawsuit regarding ownership of Koreshan property, only twelve of the original members remained.

New Jerusalem had risen—but it also fell.

#### *Then There Came a Boomlet*

The mysterious Everglades, long the inaccessible refuge of the wily Indian, furnished the spark in 1909 for setting off a Florida boomlet.

After Hamilton Disston's ill-fated drainage venture during the 1880's nothing was done to reclaim the Glades for more than fifteen years. Work was resumed under the direction of one of the most colorful men in Florida's political history—Napoleon B. Broward.

Famed for his exploits as a smuggler of munitions to the hard-pressed Cuban patriots in the days before the Spanish-American War, Broward ran for governor in 1904 on the platform of "the Glades must be reclaimed for the people." He was elected after a bitter campaign and soon after he took office, dredging operations were resumed.

Broward knew next to nothing about the engineering problems involved and neither did his subordinates but they were favored by Nature.



Downtown Fort Myers and the waterfront as they appeared from the air in 1924, before construction of the Yacht Basin.

Because of a long dry spell, some of the land around Lake Okeechobee became almost dry enough for cultivation and water started to recede all through the sawgrass region. It seemed as though a miracle had been performed.

Few people objected, therefore, when the state sold chunks of Everglades land to get money to carry on the work. Moreover, few people objected when the land speculators who bought the swamplands began putting them on the market in a super-hoopla manner. Their sales campaigns were launched in a big way during 1909.

The nation became overrun by the promoters' high pressure salesmen who insisted that a ten-acre farm in the Promised Land would make a person independent for life. In that Empire of the Sun, they raved, crops grew as though by magic, chickens never stopped laying, cows and hogs attained mammoth size, and life for humans was full and rich.

Retired school teachers bought farm plots and so did retired bankers, professional men and merchants. Even experienced farmers, desirous of living in the fabled land where flowers never die, became purchasers. In all walks of life the glib salesmen found men and women ready to believe even the wildest tales about the Poor Man's Paradise. Sales ran into the millions.

Fort Myers became the gateway city to the marvelous Everglades. Hundreds of hopeful purchasers, eager to get to the land of their dreams, poured into Fort Myers every month, filling hotels and boarding houses to overflowing. They tarried a day or so and then went up the river on Capt. Fred Menge's "Suwanee" or on the "Queen of the Everglades" provided by Richard J. Bolles, one of the biggest Glades' promoters.

Publicity given the Everglades boom by the nation's press probably was one of the main reasons why Congress finally gave recognition to the Caloosahatchee. In the River and Harbors Act of June 25, 1910, an appropriation of \$121,000 was made to deepen and improve the channel in the river from Punta Rassa to Fort Thompson. The work was started later in 1910 and continued for more than a year and a half.

While a turning basin was made at Fort Myers' front door an island was made in the river. J. L. Lofton, then engaged in dredging, decided the island would make a fine place to live so he took possession of it without formality. He maintained a home there for many years and established squatter's rights to it. Long afterward, in the spring of 1948, he sold the island to Thomas Phillips for \$4,000.

Before the government operations started the Caloosahatchee between Alva and Fort Thompson was widely acclaimed as one of the most beautiful rivers in the world. Great live oaks, hickories, willows and magnolias stretched their branches far out over the water, and here and there a giant palmetto leaned from the river bank, picturesquely overhanging the water. The trees were filled with flowering vines and air plants covered with beautiful red blossoms. The channel twisted and turned and passengers on the river steamers expected the boats to go climbing up the bank at any moment. One bend, in the shape of a letter

"S," was so tortuous that pilots had to tie their steamers to a tree before the turn could be made. This spot was called "Rope Bend" and pictures of it were sent everywhere by tourists.

Many of the famous beauty spots in the upper river were destroyed in the improvement program which widened the channel, cut down overhanging trees and branches which interfered with navigation, and eliminated most of the twists and turns. The work had to be done but it brought grief to many nature lovers in Fort Myers.

The beauty of the river was marred in another way. In attempting to provide a link in a cross-state waterway, the state deepened and widened the canals between the head of the river and Lake Okeechobee. This permitted a great volume of drainage water from the Glades, heavily laden with humus, to pour down the river, causing it to become dark and murky and covering the once white, sandy bottom with black silt. The Caloosahatchee soon ceased to be the ideal swimming place it had always been before.

During the winter of 1913-14, the Everglades boom ended almost as soon as it began. Few of those who purchased "farm plots" could endure the loneliness or the mosquitoes of the Promised Land. Many never had an opportunity to try farming. Much of the land sold was under several feet of water. Despite all the fine claims made for it, the land had never been reclaimed and wouldn't be for years to come. Bemoaned one purchaser: "I have bought land by the acre; I have bought land by the foot but, by God, I never before bought land by the gallon."

Some of the officials of companies which sold the watery land were charged with fraud and tried in federal court. A few were convicted but, so far as is known, none ever went to jail.

The Everglades episode undoubtedly helped Fort Myers. Hundreds of persons who had bought Glades land and then left, disillusioned, settled permanently either in Fort Myers or somewhere in the Land of the Caloosahatchee. They aided materially in the development of the entire region.

Publicity given by the nation's press to the Glades before the land swindle became apparent was beneficial to the entire state. It coincided with a burst of advertising done by growing resort cities and helped to make the entire country "Florida conscious." People became desirous of seeing this wonderful place they heard so much about, so to Florida they came. They liked it, and bought property, and settled down. Their coming resulted in a state-wide boomlet.

The federal census of 1910 had shown that the population of Fort Myers leaped from 943 in 1900 to 2,463 in 1910, a gain of 161.2 per cent. What was more important, the town continued to grow. The "cow town" of yesterday was rapidly becoming a real city.

#### *Fort Myers Builds into Itself*

Before the twentieth century was ten years old Fort Myers began having serious growing pains. It suffered from a lack of houses, store and office buildings and, above all, a modern school.

The existing school was admittedly a disgrace to the community. It was merely an enlargement of the two-room wooden structure erected in 1887 immediately after Lee County was created. To this original building a two-story wooden addition was made in 1902 and thereafter the school was dignified by being called the Lee County High School.

Regardless of the name, it was still a flimsy, ramshackle makeshift. When the enrollment passed the 300 mark during the term of 1908-09, the school bulged at the seams. To take care of the overflow, the trustees of the Holiness Church permitted classes to be held in its building on Second Street. The county commissioners also made a room for classes in the county barn.

Children were seen going into the barn one day by a winter visitor, Col. Andrew D. Gwynne, a wealthy cotton broker and wholesale grocer of Memphis, Tenn. He told his wife that if a movement was ever started in Fort Myers to get better school facilities, he would gladly make a donation to take care of part of the expense.

Colonel Gwynne died that summer in Memphis, on July 20, 1909. His widow remembered what he had said about the donation, and so did his son, Capt. W. F. Gwynne.

That same summer parents of children attending the overcrowded school appealed to the school board to provide a modern building. The board members admitted that the existing situation was appalling but they insisted they didn't have enough money to build the type of school Fort Myers needed. They promised, however, to do what they could.

At this critical juncture, Mrs. Gwynne and her son came to the rescue. They said they would match any sum raised by the town. With this incentive, the town people headed by Carl F. Roberts waged a whirlwind campaign and within two months raised \$8,000. The Gwynnes then pledged an equal amount. An additional \$10,000 was obtained from a special bond issue. The school board members kept their promise and provided enough additional funds to pay for a building which, with equipment, cost \$45,000. It was opened for classes Friday, October 20, 1911, and was named the Andrew D. Gwynne Institute.

In memory of two old-timers who had been friends of the children in bygone days, the pictures of Major James Evans and Capt. Peter Nelson were hung in the school. Captain Nelson had represented Fort Myers for years on the Monroe County school board, before Lee County was created, and had donated money for the first school. Major Evans had donated the site on which the first school owned by Lee County was erected. The new school occupied the same site. The old building was moved to Safety Hill and used as a school for the colored children.

While the institute was under construction almost everyone believed it would be large enough to take care of the community for years to come. But the school term had no sooner started than it became apparent that another building was essential, due to the rapid increase in enrollment. Plans were therefore made for a new high school building and a \$35,000 bond issue to pay for it was put before the voters on

September 3, 1913. It was approved 80 to 6. The new 17-room structure was opened for classes in the fall of 1914.

Fort Myers then had two schools which compared most favorably with any in south Florida.

Building followed building in Fort Myers during that eventful five year period preceding World War I.

One of the new structures provided something Fort Myers had needed badly for many years—a modern packing plant. It was constructed by the Lee County Packing Company, organized March 3, 1909, with Harvie E. Heitman as president; John M. Dean, vice-president, and W. S. Garvey, secretary. The directors included the officers and D. S. Borland, R. A. Henderson, Sr., W. H. Woodward, Dr. Franklin Miles and R. R. Hice.

The plant went into operation November 24, 1910. It was said to be the largest plant in the world used exclusively for the packing of citrus fruit. Two stories high, 130 by 250 feet, it had a capacity of twenty cars of fruit a day. During the season of 1912-13 it handled 118,000 boxes of fruit.

On Friday night, January 30, 1914, the plant was destroyed in the most destructive fire in the town's history. Flames were seen shooting from the building at 8 p. m. by seamen on the steamer "Mildred," then coming up the river. They yelled to people on shore who sent in the alarm. By the time the volunteer firemen arrived, the entire building was ablaze. All hope of saving it was soon abandoned and the firemen concentrated on saving Ireland's dock where 15,000 gallons of gasoline, kerosene and naphtha were stored.



*Photo Courtesy of Lee County Chamber of Commerce*

McGregor Boulevard, connecting Fort Myers and the beaches, is famous for its beautiful royal palms which line both sides of the highway for miles.

The "Thomas A. Edison," owned by Menge Brothers, was tied to the railroad dock and started burning before she could be towed away. The steamer burned to the water's edge. Heitman estimated the total loss caused by the fire at \$150,000: the packing house building and machinery, \$75,000; 1,200 boxes of fruit and stock of paper, \$25,000; the "Thomas A. Edison," \$15,000; Lofton Ways and Boats, \$3,000; and the railroad dock and buildings, \$32,000.

Immediately following the fire, officers of the packing company proceeded to erect a temporary packing plant at a cost of \$20,000. This was replaced during the following summer by a plant which was even larger than the original.

Old, familiar, ramshackle wooden buildings in the heart of town disappeared one after another during the pre-war building boom of 1910-14. Harvie Heitman started off in 1910 by erecting a second addition to the Bradford Hotel. Then, early in 1911, he jumped across the street and took the lead in financing a new, three-story brick building on the southwest corner of First and Jackson to serve as a new home for the Bank of Fort Myers. The bank moved into its new quarters in December.

Also during 1911 Taff O. Langford tore down the old frame building next to the new bank and built a two-story brick structure known, in 1948, as the Miller Building. Down at the next corner, Dr. B. P. Matheson improved the Stone Block and opened the Leon Hotel on the second floor. Large additions were made during the same year to the Royal Palm Hotel and the Riverview, both owned then by Mrs. Tootie McGregor Terry.

James A. "Pineapple Jim" Hendry joined the 1911 building parade by constructing a two-story brick building on the northwest corner of Main and Hendry. The post office was located in this building for many years. Later, it became the home of the Lee County Bank.

Down on the waterfront, William H. Towles built a warehouse on the Jackson Street wharf for his newly established Towles Line of steamers to Key West and Tampa, made possible by the deepening of the river channel by the government.

East Fort Myers had a boomlet all its own during 1912. Edgewood was opened and developed by John M. Dean's Mutual Realty Company and Woodward Grove was developed by Frierson & Hendry.

During 1911 and 1912 more than two hundred new houses were built, the city spreading out in all directions. To make more close-in residential lots available, Carl F. Roberts subdivided Monroe Heights, one block from the courthouse.

A new phase in the metamorphosis of the downtown section was opened in 1912 with the arrival in Fort Myers of a man from Michigan—Peter Tonnelier.

#### *He Bought and Bought*

High winds on the Gulf drove Peter Tonnelier into Fort Myers in February, 1912. He remained to invest more than a half million dollars—and greatly alter the appearance of the downtown section.

Tonnelier was a retired business man and banker from Benton Harbor, Mich. Because of ill health he came to Florida in 1910 and spent the winter in St. Petersburg. While there he bought a valuable downtown corner. The next winter he skipped over to Sarasota and built a combination theatre-hotel building.

While in Sarasota, Tonnelier and his brother Henry chartered a yacht and started on a cruise down the Gulf. They were in San Carlos Bay when a storm blew up. To find shelter and pass the time away, they sailed up the Caloosahatchee to Fort Myers. They had no intention of staying but Peter liked the looks of the place and decided to stop a few days and look it over.

On the first night in town they started talking to Dr. Benjamin P. Matheson, owner of the Stone Block on the southwest corner of First and Hendry. The doctor said he would like to sell the building and an acre which went with it. Peter Tonnelier asked him how much he wanted. The doctor replied: "\$150,000." Tonnelier didn't bat an eye. "You've made a sale," he declared. "Have the papers made out and we'll be back with the money." On April 1, 1912, the deal was closed.

Almost everyone in Fort Myers said the Tonneliers would lose by having spent such an outlandish price as \$150,000 for the Stone Block corner. But the Tonneliers knew they had made a good bargain. And their purchase undoubtedly established a new basis for real estate values in the downtown section.

Peter Tonnelier continued to pay "outlandish" prices for downtown business sites. On January 4, 1913, he paid Mrs. Olive E. Stout \$7,000 for a lot on Hendry street, near the Stone Block, which was only 35 feet wide. Tonnelier immediately tore down the building on the lot so that meant he paid \$200 a front foot for the land alone. He kept on buying, paying equally high prices for everything.

During the following ten years Tonnelier bought fifty-two separate parcels of real estate in Fort Myers and Lee County, thereby becoming the county's second largest property owner. He also bought many other properties in partnership with his brother Henry and still more with his brother Edward. The Tonneliers were just about the best buyers of real estate that had ever come to town.

Peter Tonnelier started developing the court now known as Patio de Leon during 1913. During the two years following he erected most of the buildings in the court, including the theatre now known as the Ritz. Later he built four medium sized hotels and many mercantile buildings and residences in all parts of town.

Tonnelier lost a tenant, the First National Bank, soon after he bought the Stone Block. The bank had had its offices in the building for five years but after the Bank of Fort Myers, its competitor, moved into a brand new home at First and Jackson, officials of the First National decided that they also would have to get new quarters. So, late in July, 1913, they awarded a contract to G. A. Miller, of Tampa, for a \$50,000 building on

the southeast corner of First and Hendry. The structure was completed and opened on August 17, 1914.

The only individual who surpassed Tonnelier in building during 1914 was Harvie E. Heitman. That was the year Heitman really performed a face lifting job on the business section.

Heitman swung into action on April 20 when he put a large gang of men to work tearing down the ancient livery stable and other old frame buildings on the south side of First between the new First National building and the new Langford block. On this site he proceeded to build the \$85,000 Earnhardt Building, 193 feet long and two stories high. When completed on February 10, 1915, it was acclaimed the finest building south of Tampa.

While this building was being constructed, Heitman also erected a \$25,000, two-story brick structure known as the Heitman-Evans Building on the northwest corner of First and Hendry. To make way for the new building, a dilapidated frame building, erected forty years before by Jehu Blount for his general store, was razed and when it was demolished one of Fort Myers' oldest landmarks disappeared.

During this same period Heitman also built a \$10,000 building on Bay Street. It was used first as a roller skating rink and later as a garage.

Fort Myers saw its first bonafide real estate development completed during 1914. The developer was John W. Dean, a winter visitor from Providence, R. I., where he was a prominent furniture dealer. Before Dean got to work Fort Myers had had numerous real estate subdivisions but the development of them consisted of little more than pounding in lot stakes and grading a few streets. The Providence man proceeded to demonstrate the difference between a subdivider and a developer.

Dean had been coming to Fort Myers to spend the winter ever since 1899 when he arrived with a friend, Frank L. Budlong, to go hunting. Two years later he purchased the 42-acre Barrington place down the river and started a citrus grove known as the Twin Palm Grove. In March, 1901, he bought 38 acres adjoining Billy's Creek from Peck Brothers, of Chicago, paying \$8,500.

When Dean bought this latter tract it was low and swampy and flooded by the backwash of the Caloosahatchee when the tides ran high. It was not a pretty place. Dean did not start development work at once—he realized that real estate prices in Fort Myers had yet not reached a level high enough to justify expensive improvements. So he bided his time.

Late in 1912 Dean bought a dredge and during the following year began making fills on his Billy's Creek bog. Altogether, 150,000 cubic yards of sand were pumped in. When that phase of the work was completed, Dean employed a gang of 35 men and kept them busy constructing streets, laying sidewalks, and planting palms and shrubs. Late in 1914 the property was put on the market. It was known first as Hyde Park and later as Dean Park. The reclaimed marsh became one of the finest residential sections of the city.

*The County Gets a New Courthouse—by Force*

Williams H. Towles was a forceful, determined man. Heavy set, red cheeked and curly haired he gave the appearance of being a hail fellow well met. That was not his reputation, however, among persons who opposed his plans. Almost invariably the dispute ended with Towles getting what he wanted.

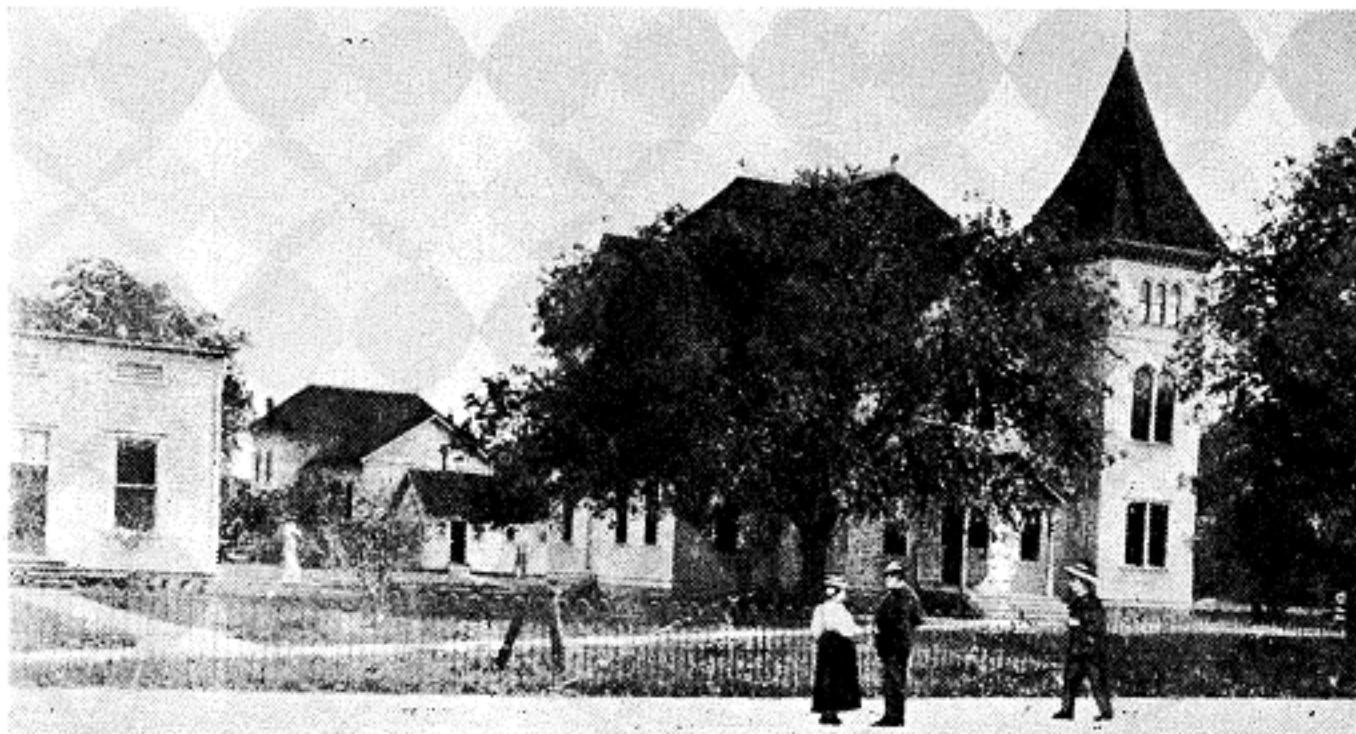
Back in the late 1880's, Towles was one of the leaders who fought to get a splendid courthouse for the then infant county of Lee. He wanted a fine concrete building, three stories high, which would advertise to all who came the power and strength of Florida's youngest child.

By working tirelessly, he managed to win enough public support to get a \$20,000 bond issue approved by a 100 to 47 vote. A contract for the building was let and work was started. But then the hard times of the early 90's came along, the bonds could not be sold, and finally Lee County had to be satisfied with a piddling wooden courthouse which cost only \$3,640.

Towles was frustrated and badly irked. But there was nothing he could do about it. He couldn't lick a panic.

So Towles sat back and waited. When the pre-war boom was at its peak, he was again chairman of the board of county commissioners, just as he had been a quarter century before. Now everyone was prosperous and Towles decided that the time had come for the county to get the courthouse it had long deserved.

The other county commissioners were easily persuaded that a new and far better courthouse was needed—the existing one didn't even have rest rooms for men and women. So they engaged an architect, Francis J.



*Photo Courtesy of Judge Lynn Gerald.*

The Lee County Courthouse which was razed in 1914 by the county commissioners, headed by fiery "Bill" Towles, to make way for a more modern building.

Kennard, of Tampa, and plans for a new building were drafted. And on July 5, 1914, they awarded the contract to F. P. Heifner, of Atlanta, for \$74,900.

Towles glowed with pleasure—at last he was going to get the kind of courthouse he long had craved. But the husky warrior glowed too soon. Harvie E. Heitman couldn't see any sense in spending \$74,900 of tax money when the old courthouse was still sound, even though crowded and outmoded. With several of his friends, Heitman stopped Towles in his tracks, two different times, by getting court orders which enjoined the commissioners from proceeding.

The injunctions were granted by Judge F. A. Whitney, in Arcadia, on technical grounds: first, because the commissioners had not passed a resolution showing the need for a new courthouse, and second, because they had added interest charges to the contract price after bids had been received.

Undaunted, the commissioners advertised for bids again and in September awarded a contract to C. P. Miller, of Tampa, who agreed to build the courthouse for \$87,000—prices were going up. But pressure was brought on Miller and he backed out of his contract, forfeiting a \$1,700 bond. Once more the commissioners advertised and on October 23, 1914, they awarded a contract again to Heifner, this time for \$100,000.

Three days later the commissioners learned the courthouse opponents were going to try and block them once more—that they were sending Francis W. Perry and C. L. Johnson to Arcadia that afternoon to get another injunction on the basis of a lack of necessity for a new building. Irritated no end, the commissioners hastily passed a resolution authorizing Towles to take whatever action he deemed necessary.

The board chairman didn't waste a minute. He called in Contractor Heifner and talked to him behind closed doors. And then, after the train had pulled out, taking with it Perry and Johnson, Heifner and a crew of men swung into action. Towles had given instructions to have the existing courthouse demolished, torn down to its foundations, completely wrecked. He had no intentions of being foiled again.

The workmen started in on the steeple and ripped it off. They then took out the windows and the doors, and started tearing off the siding. Frenziedly they worked. When darkness came, bonfires were lighted and the work proceeded. A huge crowd gathered. Men, women and children cheered the workmen on. It was great sport. Never before had anything like this ever happened in Florida. Old timers say Towles sat on steps nearby with a shotgun in his hands, ready to take a pot-shot at anyone who tried to halt the demolition job.

The workmen kept on going until they were tired out. Then they went home and got a few hours' rest. Shortly after daybreak they were back again and by noon the courthouse was so thoroughly razed that it could not possibly be restored. Now there remained no doubt about the "necessity" for a new structure.

On November 12, 1914, Judge Whitney refused to grant another injunction—it would have been a case of locking the door after the horse was stolen. The cornerstone for the new courthouse was laid Tuesday, April 13, 1915, with Masonic ceremonies. The speakers were Capt. F. A. Hendry, Edward Parkinson, W. S. Turner, R. G. Collier, W. J. Odom, E. L. Evans and of course the one and only William H. Towles. He was getting what he long had wanted—the new courthouse was a certainty. The new building was completed and occupied in December.

An extremely important by-product of the courthouse demolition job was a hospital—the first hospital Fort Myers ever had.

The town had wanted a hospital for many, many years but never had been able to get one. Persons who became critically ill or needed operations were taken to Tampa, or Key West—or were cared for at home.

Initial steps to get a hospital were taken Tuesday, January 2, 1912, at a meeting of representatives of all civic organizations, churches, businesses and professions. A working committee was appointed consisting of Mayor L. A. Hendry, Dr. J. E. Brecht, president of the medical society, and the Reverends C. N. Thomas, G. F. Scott and A. M. Hildebrand. Others present at the meeting included L. S. Stewart, C. Q. Stewart, L. N. Stroup, Nathan G. Stout, Mrs. Olive E. Stout, Mrs. E. Hutchinson, Mrs. William Hanson, Mrs. Harry Laycock, Mrs. George F. Ireland, Mrs. A. M. Brandon, Mrs. O. L. Johns, Mrs. P. A. Ruhl, Mrs. W. S. Manson and Mrs. C. N. Thomas.

Despite this auspicious beginning, slow progress was made. The city council voted \$300 but there the project rested—for months and months. Not until the courthouse was torn down was anything definite accomplished. Lumber from the old building was turned over to the hospital board by the county commissioners, a site at Victoria and Grand was secured, and work of constructing a hospital was started.

Progress was made slowly. Donations were few and far between. Only a few of the more progressive people helped push the project along. Many still believed that a hospital was just a place to die in, and since they did not care about dying they did not care about a hospital. Even some of the physicians were apathetic and a few were openly antagonistic.

Finally, however, the hospital was finished. It was two stories high and had four rooms for patients. The grounds were desolate—no grass, no shrubs, no trees. Shacks in which colored people lived were close by. The equipment was most meagre. There were no chairs for visitors to sit on and in the kitchen there were no pots or pans or even dishes.

The Lee Memorial Hospital, as it was called, was opened in October, 1916, with Mrs. Edith Davidson, former superintendent of the Arcadia Hospital, in charge. The president of the hospital board then was Carl F. Roberts and other members were C. W. Carlton, Dr. W. B. Winkler, Mrs. Harry Laycock, Mrs. Julia Hanson, Mrs. Olive E. Stout, and Miss Minnie Gardner. The staff members were Doctors Winkler, Ernest Brecht, A. P. Hunter, and G. F. Henry. Dr. Daniel McSwain, of Arcadia, was the chief surgeon.

The first patient was Sam Thompson who was rushed in when he suffered an acute attack of appendicitis. Dr. McSwain came in from Arcadia on the next train and Thompson was operated on. Superintendent Davidson had to go to Dr. Henry's office to sterilize the bandages. But, despite the lack of adequate facilities, Thompson lived.

### *Fort Myers Goes Gingerly into Debt*

Back in the old days the people of Fort Myers were definitely not spendthrifts—so far as the community was concerned.

A few of the good citizens were opposed to spending money for public improvements simply because they wanted Fort Myers to remain the way it was—a little frontier cow town with no fancy faddeals to attract newcomers. They had no desire to see their tiny village become a bustling city.

This element of the population was outnumbered by a larger group of citizens which wanted all sorts of improvements but did not want to be called upon to pay for them. These worthy people were chronically opposed to taxes, and as for issuing bonds, and plunging the town into debt, to get improvements in a hurry—heaven forbid!

The town officials often were progressive men who wanted to see Fort Myers forge ahead but they did not have the temerity to present a proposed bond issue to a vote of the people until sixteen years after the town was incorporated. The fateful test was made on April 15, 1901, on a proposed \$10,000 bond issue—\$7,000 for a water system and \$3,000 for street improvements. The bond issue was defeated, 22 to 14. Two votes were lacking to give the necessary two-thirds majority of 24 to 12.

Exactly one year later the town fathers tried again, presenting a proposed \$12,000 bond issue—\$9,000 for a water system and \$3,000 for streets. This time the issue was approved, 27 to 13, and the progressives cheered. But they cheered prematurely. The "no-taxation" group carried the matter to the courts and the proposed issue was ruled illegal on the grounds that the town, under its original charter, had no right to issue bonds.

The court decision effectively silenced further talk of bond issues for several years. An attempt was made during the 1903 session of the state legislature to have the town charter amended to make bond issues legal. But the measure died in committee without coming up for vote. Two years later the town progressives had better luck. A delegation led by Mayor Louis A. Hendry went to Tallahassee and camped on the steps of the state capitol until Representative Frank J. Wilson pushed through the essential act—on May 19, 1905.

Contrary to the generally accepted belief, this act did not incorporate Fort Myers as a city. It merely re-incorporated it as a town with greater powers than it had had before. The town officials were given the right to issue bonds, upon a majority vote of the citizens, for certain specified purposes: (1) to improve the streets and sidewalks, (2) to establish waterworks and fire protection, (3) to establish a gas or electric light system, (4) to purchase or erect a town market building and

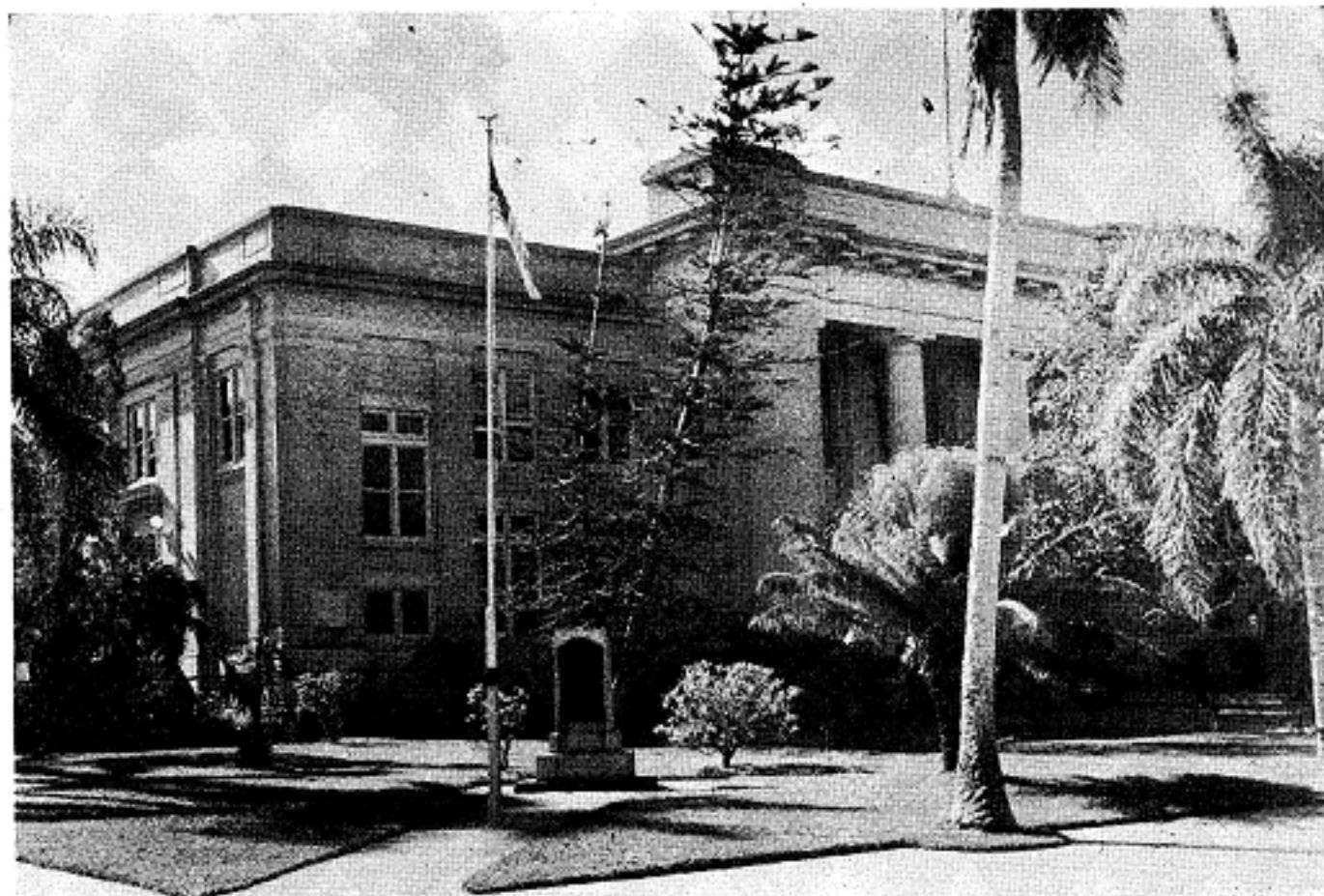
grounds, (5) to establish a street railway system and (6) to provide a public park or parks and improve the same.

Philip Isaacs, then editor of the Press, was one of the group who did not believe in taxes and, consequently, he did not approve of the bond enabling act. He merely carried a 13-line brief stating that Representative Wilson had introduced a bill "relating to the incorporation of Fort Myers" and that it had been passed under suspension of the rules. That was all. He did not give any details and the paper never mentioned it again.

With support from the "no-taxers" W. D. Bell was elected mayor in August of 1905 and no attempt was made while he was in office to bond the town for improvements. But on August 7, 1906, Fort Myers elected its first native born mayor, Henry A. Hendry, son of W. Marion Hendry.

The new mayor wanted progress, even though it had to be paid for, and he vigorously fought for a \$25,000 bond issue—\$15,000 for water-works and \$10,000 for sewers. But the "no-taxers" defeated it, on November 13, 1906, by a vote of 47 to 26. Not yet was the town willing to go "head over heels in debt."

The defeat of the bond issue probably can be chalked up as a victory for Editor Isaacs. In an editorial on April 4, 1907, while a seawall bond issue was being considered, Isaacs wrote: "The Press has never believed in advocating a measure that would be burdensome to the taxpayers. It dropped the seawall proposal a year ago, just as it has dropped other propositions for bonding, just because it believed the people were not ready."



*Photo Courtesy of Lee County Chamber of Commerce*

The Lee County Courthouse, erected in 1915.

Soon after this editorial was printed Isaacs was succeeded as editor of the Press by Peter Ruhl, who insisted week after week that public improvements were essential. But the town fathers didn't work up enough nerve to present another bond issue until the spring of 1910 when they called for a vote on a \$60,000 issue. With valiant support from the Press, it received magnificent endorsement—82 to 7.

However, the town officials had failed to break down the issue as required by law, specifying how the money was to be spent, and the error was not detected until after the vote was taken. The officials then re-advertised the proposal and the bonds were approved, 58 to 15. Of the total, \$35,000 was earmarked for a sewerage system, \$15,000 for a waterworks and \$10,000 for a new school. This was on July 8, 1910.

The \$60,000 bond issue, the first in the town's history, was sold at par on January 24, 1911, to Ulen & Company, of Chicago. A contract was then let to the American Light & Water Company, of Jacksonville, for laying the water mains and sewers. At the same time, the town officials gave the Seminole Light & Ice Company a ten-year franchise to furnish water and provide the machinery and pumps. However, opposition to this franchise quickly developed, officials of the company being charged with "tieing the town's hands." So A. A. Gardner, head of the company, cancelled the contract and the town proceeded to buy a pumping station and a 50,000-gallon tank of its own. They were put up at "Sand Spur Patch" and completed in September. To supply the water needed, three artesian wells were dug near the pumping plant.

These were by no means the first artesian wells in town. Many others had been drilled before by private property owners. Two of the first were drilled for Hugh O'Neill when he built his hotel in 1897. They went down 480 feet and the water which gushed from them was described "as pure as water straight from heaven and with just enough sulphur in it to be delightful to the taste." Patrons of the hotel, however, didn't think as well of the taste as O'Neill and they demanded cistern water for drinking, the same as town people.

Will Sinif, chief custodian of C. E. Reed's well drilling outfit, had the honor of drilling the first town-owned well in May, 1904, at what is now the intersection of First and Dean. He went down 481 feet and the water poured forth from the five-inch pipe at the rate of 300 gallons a minute. To have the well drilled, the town paid \$1 a foot. The second well was drilled in June at First and Hendry. These two town-owned wells were connected with a well near First and Jackson, owned by Harvie Heitman, to provide the town's first "fire protection system," hydrants being installed along the way.

A watering trough which was pictured in countless Fort Myers post cards was built in July, 1904, at the intersection of First and Hendry. It remained there until May 26, 1910, when it was replaced by a more attractive trough and drinking fountain in front of the First National Bank. This new fountain-trough was presented to the town as a gift by William H. Towles.

While the sewers and water mains were being installed during 1911 and 1912 the streets throughout Fort Myers became almost impassable.

But people did not complain too strenuously. They soon would be able to get rid of their outdoor privies. The trunk sewers were extended out into the Caloosahatchee, "so far out," said the Press, "that the menace of sewage has been eliminated forever."

The town was so engrossed by this wide-flung improvement program that it became a full-fledged city without hardly anyone's being aware of what was happening.

On May 23, 1911, Governor Albert W. Gilchrist signed an act which placed Fort Myers for the first time in the ranks of Florida's incorporated cities. It declared "the town of Fort Myers a city with all the rights and privileges heretofore conferred upon such town."

Inexplicably, not a word about this act was carried in the Press—not one story about it. And the town clerk kept on recording the minutes of the "town" council until the first meeting in September. Then he changed and made his minutes read "minutes of the city council."

The first public improvement acted upon by the first "city" council was a public pier at the foot of Fowler Street. Harvie E. Heitman and Capt. W. F. Gwynne launched the movement for the pier in November, 1911, raised a fund of \$2,250 by public subscription, and asked the city council for permission to build it. They also asked the council to contribute \$1,000.

Councilman Robert A. Henderson, Sr., objected strenuously, saying that the pier would be a nuisance for residents who lived in that neighborhood, particularly his good friends John T. Murphy and S. C. Bass.

Henderson's attitude aroused the wrath of Edward P. Bates. In a letter published in the Press on January 11, 1912, he said: "This gentleman seems to be unable to realize that this city has passed the pistol, shotgun and barroom stage of twenty years ago. Constantly we hear people say: 'Why doesn't Fort Myers advertise its attractions?' But what have we to advertise: We do not have a public park, a recreation center, or even good roads—not even one to the Gulf. Nowhere is there a pier where one can look over the Caloosahatchee. Surely we can afford a pier."

Bates' remarks caused a flurry of protests, everyone saying that Fort Myers had countless attractions to advertise. But the agitation for a pier continued and on February 2, 1912, the council agreed to donate \$1,000. W. P. Henley was awarded the contract and John M. Dean filled in the approach as his contribution. However, the pledged subscriptions came in slowly and the project was not completed until the spring of 1913. The official opening was celebrated April 11 with a concert on the pier head by the Fort Myers Military Band.

The pier was the first man-made "tourist attraction" provided by Fort Myers.

Its construction may have hastened the revival in 1912 of the semi-dormant Board of Trade, long plagued by factional quarreling. It had accomplished little since it was first organized in 1904 to help bring in the Coast Line. Fort Myers was advertised only through special editions published every few years by the Press.

During the summer of 1912 the directors of the Board of Trade finally called an armistice in their squabbling and agreed that the time had come to advertise Fort Myers in a big way by getting out a booklet. To help prepare it, the directors employed their first full-time, paid secretary, Allen H. Roberts, of Jacksonville.

Roberts did a good job and the booklet was so well received that the city councilmen decided it might be a good thing to get one out each year. To pay for the booklets and also advertise the city in newspapers and magazines, the councilmen approved a half mill publicity tax to bring in \$2,850 annually. With this money in sight, the Board of Trade printed 10,000 more booklets in December and sent them North for distribution.

Before the next year came to an end, however, it began to appear as though Fort Myers might soon have nothing left to advertise. The city was being literally burned up.

A ruinous series of fires started on the night of January 30, 1914, with the destruction of the Lee County Packing House, the "Thomas A. Edison," and the railroad pier, causing a loss of \$75,000.

On June 18, of the same year, the side wheel steamer "Planter," owned by the Towles Line, burned to the water's edge while anchored three hundred feet off the dock. On September 19, the Heitman warehouse on the pier was destroyed by fire. On November 18, eight frame buildings at Hendry and Oak occupied by stores and rooming houses were gutted, causing a reported loss of \$32,000.

Immediately following this last fire, which threatened the entire downtown section, the city fathers decided to spend enough of the city's money to buy a modern, motor-driven fire engine with a pumping capacity of 750 gallons a minute. It was ordered December 5, 1914, along with 500 feet of hose.

Before the fire engine arrived, the city suffered another costly blaze. Early in the morning of February 26, 1915, a fire started near the exit of the Grand Theatre in the Langford Building. It spread into the theatre and to nearby stores and before it was extinguished, it caused a \$11,000 loss.

The fire truck arrived April 7, 1915, and on May 8 the city council awarded a contract for the construction of a new fire station to cost \$1,365. A city prison, to be built adjoining, also was contracted for at a cost of \$1,360.

In the burst of public improvements which featured the boomlet of the 'teens, Fort Myers got some new streets—\$47,000 worth. A bond issue for that amount was approved 87 to 33 on March 20, 1913, but the bonds were not sold until late in the year.

A further delay was caused by a long, bitter discussion regarding the kind of "hard surfacing" to be used. Many good roads advocates insisted that the city would never be satisfied until it had brick streets. William H. Towles said concrete would be best and, to prove his point, built a stretch of concrete street in front of his home. But a majority of the city councilmen agreed that either brick or concrete would be too expensive so asphalt covered shell streets were ordered. W. R. Wallace

& Co. was awarded the contract and the improvement program was completed in the late summer of 1915. All the downtown streets and many of the residential streets were given the shell-asphalt treatment. In the beginning the streets were nice and smooth but they didn't remain that way long—summer rains soon began wreaking havoc with them.

Because of the generosity of Mrs. Tootie McGregor Terry, Fort Myers and Lee County got their first really good boulevard.

On February 2, 1912, Mrs. Terry offered to construct a 50-foot boulevard to Punta Rassa beginning at Whiskey Creek if the city and county would construct a similar boulevard between the creek and Monroe Street. She also agreed to pay \$500 a year to maintain the road. Her only stipulation was that the boulevard be called McGregor Boulevard in perpetuity, in memory of her first husband, Ambrose M. McGregor. The offer was accepted at once by both the city council and the county commissioners.

Mrs. Terry died Saturday, August 17, 1912, at her summer home in Mamaroneck-on-the-Hudson, N. Y., but Dr. Terry notified the city and county that the work would proceed the same as though she had lived. On December 12, 1912, the council agreed to give Dr. Terry permission to erect a monument at Cleveland and Anderson to honor his wife's memory. The monument was erected and dedicated the following summer. It was still standing in 1948, minus its lights and the heads of snakes from which water used to gush.

The city and county proceeded with their part of the project and by the summer of 1914 had completed a macadam road all the way to Whiskey Creek. Difficulties encountered by Dr. Terry in settling his wife's estate prevented him from proceeding as rapidly as he had expected but by the summer of 1915 he had completed it, with bridges and culverts, at a cost of \$105,000. The county commissioners formally accepted the boulevard, and named it McGregor Boulevard, on July 14, 1915.

Now, for the first time, motorists could go all the way to Punta Rassa without getting stuck in the sand. Its importance to the entire Fort Myers area can hardly be overestimated. Because of it, a large area of potentially invaluable land was opened for development.

During 1917 and 1918, Fort Myers, like all other cities throughout the nation, subordinated all things to the main task of winning World War I. Hundreds of Lee County men joined various branches of the armed services. The first Lee County man killed was Curtis P. Skelton, son of Mrs. Edna Skelton, 223 Jackson Street. He died at Soissons, France, July 13, 1918. His body was brought back to the States in May, 1921, and buried on May 25 in Arlington Cemetery.

The solution of civic problems was postponed until the war ended and work on civic improvements was delayed. However, new residents kept coming in all during the war period. Even during the darkest hours of early November, 1918, the sound of carpenters' hammers could be heard as work continued on more homes and business buildings.

The war had one serious effect—it dealt a crippling blow to the fresh vegetable industry of Sanibel and Captiva islands. Many of the younger men on the islands went into the Coast Guard and other services, creating a labor shortage. But the growers suffered an even worse blow when the government commandeered all potash for war purposes. To grow crops on the island soil, potash was essential; without it, the growers were stymied. Many left the islands.

The steamer "Dixie" which served the islands was sold to the government by the Kinzie Brothers Steamer Line early in 1918 for use in transporting soldiers to battleships. After the war ended, the Kinzies replaced her with a new "Dixie." But she never was loaded to capacity with vegetables as the old "Dixie" had been. Just when the vegetable industry on the islands was getting started again, the hurricane of October 25, 1921 covered most of the farm lands with salt water, causing serious damage. Several years passed before the soil was again free from salt.

In the fall of 1921 the damage caused by the hurricane caused little concern in the Land of the Caloosahatchee. Everyone began to sense the coming of something of far greater importance—the Big Boom.



## CHAPTER VII

### THAT CRAZY FLORIDA BOOM

A WEALTHY WINTER VISITOR from Indianapolis bought two lots in Fort Myers in December, 1925. Hundreds of others also bought lots that month but the Hoosier's purchase was noteworthy because he paid \$160,000 for two lots on First Street near Billy's Creek on which only one-family residences could be built.

The Indianapolis man got the lots through the Fort Myers Realty Company. L. C. Curtright, president of the concern, carefully pointed out that the restrictions on the lots would not expire for eight years. In the meantime, he said, they could not be used for business buildings of any kind or even for an apartment.

For the Hoosier that made no difference. He said he had no intention of building anything. "I'll sell those lots in a month or so and clean up \$50,000," he declared. "My motto is: buy and sell, buy and sell. That's the way to make money."

Literally hundreds of thousands of other persons had the same idea back in the 1920s, not just in Fort Myers, of course, but everywhere in peninsular Florida, all the way from up around Gainesville down to the Florida keys. And because tremendous profits were made through buying and selling, Florida had its Big Boom, one of the craziest phenomena in America's real estate history.

The origin of the Big Boom can be traced back to World War I. Because of the war, the public's reservoir of capital was filled to overflowing. Farmers became rich. Factory workers piled up savings. Industrialists and financiers made millions. Bank deposits throughout the nation climbed to an all-time peak. Everyone—or nearly everyone—had money to spend. Scads of money.

As the war waged on, more and more people got enough money to travel. For years they had read about the Sunny South and glamorous Florida, where all the time is summer and flowers never die. Now they could venture forth and see for themselves what Florida was really like.

The beginning of the Big Boom was deceptively slow. In fact, hardly anyone realized a boom had started. But it most certainly had. Each year the number of winter visitors increased, even after the United States entered the conflict and railroad traffic was snarled. The tourists came regardless. After the armistice the stream of tourists became a torrent, and then a flood.

The first definite indication that a boom was in the making came during the winter of 1919-20 with the invasion of Florida by the Tin Can Tourists, as motley a caravan as the world had ever seen. Shiny limousines

bumped fenders with dilapidated flivvers; sophisticated urbanites rubbed elbows with country hicks. All highways leading south were crowded. Despite slippery, slithery roads, the Tin Canners came.

Motorists made up only one division of the invading tourist army. Other sun worshippers came in palatial yachts and in private railroad coaches. Thousands of less affluent folk came by Pullman and by day coach. Every south-bound train was packed solid. The railroads had to put on specials and even then every berth was sold weeks in advance.

The brief depression of 1921 affected Florida not at all. The winter of 1921-22 brought a record-breaking crowd. Every resort city was filled to overflowing. The invading tourists dumped millions of dollars into Florida, not only for food and lodging but for homes, and land on which they could build, and thereby be sure of having a place in which to live. The Florida boom was on—in earnest.

The boom was accelerated by the magic of real estate profits. Thousands of visitors made enough money by buying lots one winter and selling them the next to pay all the expenses of their winter vacations. Plungers who bought business properties, acreage, or blocks of lots in well located subdivisions reaped golden harvests.

Returning North, they spread the word about the wonderland of Florida where fortunes could be made while basking in the sunshine. The Florida "fever" spread throughout the nation. Speculators, as well as tourists, began flocking here from every state. With them came an army of real estate salesmen, the "knickerbocker army" of high-pressure fame, the "binder boys" who operated on a shoestring and stopped at nothing to make a clean-up.

Yes, the Florida boom was on—in all its fury! Miami, St. Petersburg, West Palm Beach, Sarasota, Lake Worth and scores of smaller towns spurted ahead phenomenally. For a while, Fort Myers lagged behind. There was a reason. So far as roads were concerned, Fort Myers was almost isolated from the world.

#### *They Had "Wish to God" Roads*

Back in the old days when automobiles were called "horseless carriages," motorists called the roads in Lee County "wish to God roads."

The motorists were not blasphemous. They used the term merely in an attempt to describe the condition of the roads which then existed. In almost every road there were two sets of deep ruts. Regardless of which set the motorist took he always "wished to God" he had taken the other after his car had been stuck several times in clutching sand or clinging mud, or had been nearly jarred apart by bounding over hidden palmetto roots.

Until 1900 nothing was done by the county commissioners to improve the oxcart trails of bygone years. Then, in a burst of good roads enthusiasm, they made arrangements for grading and shelling one mile of the road from Billy's Creek to Buckingham. But they had no intentions

of squandering the taxpayers' money by covering the entire road with shell; they decided that the purpose would be served by covering just the oxcart tracks, two feet wide and six inches deep.

To save a little something more, the commissioners voted to do the work themselves rather than award it to a contractor. They bought the shell at 15 cents a barrel and hired laborers to put it down. The laborers were paid \$1.25 a day for ten hours' work. To meet this heavy expense, the commissioners levied a special road tax of 40 cents on each \$100 of taxable property.

The mile stretch leading eastward from Billy's Creek was completed late in 1900. It led through a sandy waste in which countless teams had become stuck in former years. Now the menace was ended and travelers were loud in their praise. The county commissioners hastened to extend the "highway" up the river.

Covering the wagon tracks with shell did not serve to make the road passable during the rainy season in places where it meandered through swamps and bayheads; consequently, many stretches of corduroy road had to be built with logs laid crosswise on the ruts. Pioneer motorists remember those corduroy roads with anguish but the logs at least served to keep the devil wagons from sinking to their floor boards in oozy mud.

The "improved highway" was extended up the river as far as Alva during the summer of 1902. At that point the first bridge across the Caloosahatchee was built. It was a steel draw bridge, 198 feet long, and was constructed for the county by the Converse Bridge Company, of Chattanooga, Tenn., at a cost of \$7,760. The bridge was opened May 9, 1903. Now, for the first time, travelers could cross the river without taking a ferry.

The county continued its road work on a "pay-as-you-go" basis for more than a decade. Available funds were small and, consequently, the improvements were negligible. Much of the money spent for shell was wasted because it disintegrated and disappeared in the mud and sand. In many places the roads again became impassable for anything except ox or mule teams. For the early motorists, tow chains and shovels were "must" equipment.

When the number of automobiles increased during 1910 a new demand arose for better highways. However, the auto owners were still a small minority, and people who were chronically opposed to being "taxed to death" repeatedly blocked moves to submit bond issues to the public.

Finally, after long prodding from the good roads advocates, the county commissioners called for a vote on a proposed \$200,000 issue. But the construction program they presented provided for building many "political" roads designed more to win votes than to fit into a well-co-ordinated highway system. The good roads boosters were so disgusted that they joined with the "anti-higher-taxes" crowd in voting against the issue and it was killed, 272 to 249, on September 10, 1913.

That left the whole matter just where it started. And soon it became further complicated by seemingly endless arguments regarding the

route to be chosen for a highway to connect the Land of the Caloosahatchee with the outside world.

The need for such a highway was obvious. Because of a lack of a connecting link with highways farther north, Lee County was almost as isolated as an island. Adventurous motorists managed to come through during the dry season but it was a journey which tried men's souls and few ventured on the hazardous expedition. As a result, the progress of Lee County was definitely retarded.

Everyone agreed that a connecting highway was essential. But there was a complete lack of agreement on the route the highway should follow. Two routes were proposed: the Dixie Highway route south from Arcadia, crossing the river at Olga, and a coastline route which would lead southeastward from Punta Gorda, crossing the river at Fort Myers.

Plans for the Dixie Highway provided that it should extend eastward from Olga, going up the river and passing through Alva and LaBelle, thence onward across the state by way of the southern shore of Lake Okeechobee. Many influential citizens of Lee County lived up the river in sections which would be benefitted by the Dixie Highway and, naturally, they were staunch advocates of that route. So were many prominent citizens of Fort Myers who owned large tracts of land in the up-river region.

In the early rounds of the highway battle the Dixie Highway advocates took the lead. Early in 1914 they persuaded the county commissioners to have the necessary bridge built at Olga. It was constructed by the Converse Bridge Company at a cost of \$9,700 and opened on February 20, 1915. Next, they formed a special road and bridge district and on April 18, 1916, approved a \$164,000 bond issue to build a nine-foot asphalt road from Buckingham through LaBelle and Fort Thompson to the Palm Beach County line. This road, which in places twisted and turned like a snake, was completed early in 1917. Next to McGregor Boulevard it was the first "improved highway" in the county.

This highway, incidentally, dealt the Menge Brothers Steamboat Line a fatal blow. With a road up the river opened for motor trucks, the need for river steamers no longer existed and the Menges soon were forced to go out of business. A glamorous period in the history of the Caloosahatchee was ended.

Important though the new highway was, it did not help to connect Fort Myers with the North. From Olga northward the Dixie Highway remained nothing but a dream. World War I came and went and nothing was done about building the much-talked-of road from Olga to Arcadia. The two places were connected by nothing except woods and prairie trails which forked every mile or so. None of the forks were marked and motorists had no way of knowing which prong of the fork to follow.

Likewise, nothing was done toward building a road between Fort Myers and Punta Gorda, a vital link in the coastline route. This route had acquired a fascinating name which caught the public's fancy—the

Tamiami Trail, coined by Secretary L. P. Dickie of the Tampa Board of Trade from "Tampa to Miami."

The first step to make the Tamiami Trail a reality had been taken on May 1, 1915, when the voters of southwestern Lee County approved a \$177,500 bond issue to build a nine-foot hard-surfaced road from Fort Myers to Naples and a graded road from Naples to Marco. Later in the same year people in the Everglades village section voted \$125,000 for their section of the Trail and Dade County also provided \$275,000.

The Trail had gotten off to a glorious start. But then came the entrance of the United States into World War I and, after the war ended, staggering increases in the cost of road building. Even worse, difficulties which often seemed unsurmountable had been encountered in constructing the road through the almost impassable Glades. To everyone's chagrin it was discovered that the construction of the cross-state section of the Trail, instead of being a simple road building job, was a major engineering feat and a most costly undertaking as well. The work bogged down.

South of Tampa, however, construction of the Trail proceeded steadily in the early 1920s. On June 28, 1921, a new concrete bridge over Charlotte Harbor was completed, making it possible for motorists to go as far south as Punta Gorda. The West Coast rejoiced. But Fort Myers did not join in the rejoicing—between Fort Myers and Punta Gorda no roads existed. And of course nothing had been done about building a bridge across the Caloosahatchee.



*Photo Courtesy of R. Q. Richards*

Almost half of all the able-bodied men in Fort Myers turned out in 1922 to help build the missing link in the Dixie Highway, between Olga and Arcadia. When completed the road provided Fort Myers with its first adequate outlet to the north.

The reason was simple. The bridge and the vitally needed Fort Myers-Punta Gorda road were viciously opposed by the Dixie Highway advocates, just as the Olga-Arcadia road was opposed by the advocates of the Tamiami Trail. The two groups fought openly and secretly, with every weapon at their command, waging no-quarter warfare. The battling became venomous. It was carried into business, into the banks and into the Board of Trade where it finally resulted in a split in membership, leading to the organization of the Chamber of Commerce as a competing body. The Chamber boosted for the Tamiami Trail, and the Board, the Dixie Highway.

The Trail advocates focused attention on their battle by taking part in a motorcade to Tampa. They left Fort Myers in three autos which were ferried across the river by Capt. E. E. Damkohler. The trip to Punta Gorda was made over almost impassable woods trails—but the cars finally got through. Additional motorists joined the motorcade at Punta Gorda, Englewood, Sarasota, Bradenton and Palmetto and when Tampa was reached, an enthusiastic meeting of good roads boosters was held at which everyone agreed that, regardless of opposition, the Trail must be extended to Fort Myers.

The Fort Myers contingent in the motorcade consisted of a Hudson driven by George W. Dunham, an Overland driven by Otto Neal, and a Ford driven by T. E. Taten. Others in the party were Henry Colquitt, L. A. Whitney, Fred C. Garmon, L. G. Pope, Francis W. Perry, Ora E. Chapin, R. A. Henderson, Jr., F. B. Hough and Allen H. Andrews.

Yielding to Tamiami Trail pressure, the county commissioners finally called for a vote on a \$74,000 bond issue to grade the Lee County part of a road between Fort Myers and Punta Gorda. The bonds were approved by a big majority. At almost the same time Charlotte County approved a \$150,000 bond issue for its section. By early summer of 1922 work was started at both ends of the missing link. But progress was slow—painfully slow. The route led through a section where water stood all through the rainy season and the road builders barely managed to creep along.

Capitalizing on the slow progress, the Dixie Highway advocates insisted the Olga-Arcadia road was the most practical route northward. And to speed action on their long-yearned-for highway they formed a Committee of Twelve which went forth and raised a \$28,000 fund to help pay expenses. Committee members also succeeded in persuading state officials to move a convict camp into northern Lee County so that convicts could work on the road. Moreover, they secured war surplus road building equipment from the army. And they induced hundreds of Fort Myers men to "work a day on the road" to help push the project along.

As a result of the committee's herculean efforts, a road between Olga and Arcadia was completed late in 1922. It was a marl road, and narrow, and almost as bumpy as the Rocky Road to Dublin but it was decidedly better than no road at all. Men who served on the Committee of Twelve included David Ireland, C. C. Pursley, Virgil Robb, E. H. Sykes,

C. P. Staley, D. S. Borland, J. E. Foxworthy, Morton Milford, L. C. Curt-right, Frank C. Alderman, Sr., H. C. Case and Edward Arndt.

Tamiami Trail boosters ridiculed the members of the Committee of Twelve and called them the Twelve Apostles. And the committee's achievement in getting a road built did not cause the Trail advocates to give up their fight, not even when they were blocked in their efforts to get a bond issue presented to the voters for a bridge across the Caloosahatchee. They formed the Caloosahatchee Bridge Company and secured a 20-year franchise from the county commissioners to operate a toll bridge. Incorporators of the Company were R. A. Henderson, Jr., George W. Martin, F. Irving Holmes, Henry Colquitt and E. E. Damkohler.

Construction work on a wooden bridge, which extended north from Fremont Street in East Fort Myers, was started in the fall of 1923. The work was about three-fourths finished when the state road department announced it would not help finance a road leading into a toll bridge. The county commissioners then proceeded to take over the bridge for what its builders had invested in it. The builders did not make a cent of profit.

The bridge was completed, and Fort Myers was opened to the world via the Trail, late in the winter of 1924. The official opening was held on Wednesday, March 12. It was one of the most important events in the history of the city and was celebrated in a fitting manner by a parade, a barbecue and rodeo at the fair grounds, a mardi gras, regatta, baby carnival and a fish fry. Fred Philips of the Fifty Thousand Club was general chairman and James E. Hendry, Jr., was grand marshal of the parade.

The principal speakers at the dedication ceremonies were General W. B. Haldeman, commander-in-chief of the United Confederate Veterans; Coleman DuPont; Barron G. Collier, president of the Tamiami Trail Association; Charles H. Brown, ex-mayor of Tampa, representing Governor Cary A. Hardee; A. Cavalli, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, and Ora E. Chapin, chairman of the publicity committee of the Tamiami Trail Association.

Up to the time of the opening of the bridge, Fort Myers had lagged behind other leading cities of peninsular Florida in its participation in the Big Florida Boom. Now it proceeded to demonstrate that it too could boom—in a most gorgeous fashion.

#### *Skyward Go the Prices!*

Fort Myers began going real estate crazy during the spring of 1924, just as other resort cities of the state had started to go two years before.

They were all victims of the Florida Boom, an insidious disease spread by the germ of quick and easy profits—a disease which swept the state like an epidemic, afflicting the foolish and the wise, the gullible suckers and the most astute financial wizards. Hardly anyone was immune.

Unlike most diseases, the Big Boom was very, very pleasant—for a time. It affected its victims like strong wine. It exhilarated them, made them gay and happy; put fat rolls of folding money into their pockets.

When the disease became virulent, the whole state acted as though it were on a glorious bender—beautifully intoxicated and wildly hysterical.

Minor symptoms began to show in Fort Myers before anyone realized such a disease existed. Its first manifestation was indicated by a new willingness on the part of the voters to approve public improvements without hesitation. A proposed \$72,000 bond issue, the largest in the city's history, was authorized by an overwhelming vote in the summer of 1919 and the bonds were issued October 1. They provided \$32,500 for the water system and fire protection, \$4,500 for sewer extensions, and \$35,000 for paving downtown streets. The asphalt covered shell streets made in 1914 had disintegrated and the people finally decided that a more permanent type of surfacing was needed. So a contract was let for paving the downtown streets with asphalt blocks. The work on First Street was completed March 12, 1921, and other streets in the downtown section soon afterward.

White way lights were installed on First Street by the property owners during the late summer of 1921. A new city dock, 796 feet long and 22 feet wide, was completed by the Kinzie Brothers Steamer Line on August 27.

The beautiful beaches of Estero Island were made accessible to motorists for the first time in 1921.

A movement to connect the island with the mainland by a bridge and road was pushed along late in 1920 by a shrewd, persuasive, colorful promoter named Capt. Jack DeLysle.

During World War I, DeLysle had served in the British Army. He came to the United States after the war ended and, according to reports, led an adventurous life. Contradictory stories are told about when and why he came to Fort Myers but come he did, some time during 1920. He had a beautiful wife who aided him in making friends with many of the wealthiest, most influential people in town. From them he obtained backing running into the thousands of dollars.

Forseeing the possibilities of Estero Island as a beach resort, DeLysle purchased a large tract there and started development work, laying out a subdivision called "Seminole Sands" and building a casino.

While this work was in progress DeLysle joined with other beach boosters to organize the Crescent Beach Road & Bridge Company, capitalized for \$25,000, which secured a five-year franchise to build and operate a toll bridge between the mainland and the island. Officers of the company were B. E. Tinstman, president; V. G. Widerquist, treasurer, and J. W. Blanding, secretary. The bridge was completed late in May 1921, and a graded road connecting it with McGregor Boulevard near Punta Rassa was opened on May 29. A total of 54 cents was charged for car and passengers.

With the mainland connecting link completed, the island boomed. The resort became so popular that when a movement was started in August to improve the graded road by paving it with brick, donations of both money and bricks poured in, people pledging bricks by the thousand.

The hard-surfacing was no sooner completed, however, than the hurricane of October 25 came roaring in. DeLysle's casino and one owned by Phillips & Fielder were badly damaged and so were many cottages. The beach development was given a temporary setback and for a time DeLysle was squelched. He left Fort Myers for a while but came back at the peak of the boom and made quite a splash, even starting another newspaper, the Daily Palm Leaf, to take part in political imbroglios.

Fort Myers felt so up-and-coming during 1921 that the people decided that the old-fashioned councilmanic form of government no longer was good enough for the rapidly growing city. What was needed, almost everyone agreed, was the modern, efficient commission-manager form of government.

A new charter providing for the governmental switchover was approved April 21, 1921, by a vote of 225 to 54. It was validated by the state legislature on May 19 and at an election on June 28 the first city commissioners were chosen: V. G. Widerquist, Virgil C. Robb, C. C. Pursley, B. E. Tinstman and E. H. Sykes. Robb was named by the other commissioners to serve as mayor-commissioner. J. G. Bennett was appointed first city manager at \$3,000 a year and took office August 1.

One of the first acts of the new officials was to acquire property for a city hall and park—the E. L. Evans home on McGregor Boulevard which had a 270-foot frontage on the boulevard and extended back 450 feet to the river. Evans offered the property to the city on July 22 for \$40,000 but reduced his price to \$34,000 on September 1. The commissioners bought at that price and on October 1 moved the city offices into the Evans home, where they have been located ever since. The low land at



*Photo Courtesy of Lee County Chamber of Commerce*

Modern School buildings were erected in Fort Myers during the boom days. This is a picture of Edgewood School, completed in 1926.

the river's edge was filled in during the following February for a public park. It was named Evans Park.

The commissioners soon became dissatisfied with City Manager Bennett. Charging that he was not efficient enough, they asked for his resignation and then appointed C. P. Staley to take the helm. Except for a brief period in 1925 he served through the Big Boom and on into 1928.

Using money obtained from the sale of bonds approved in 1919, the new city officials modernized the fire department, purchasing new equipment and installing a modern fire alarm system. Now, for the first time, a person who discovered a fire in the dead of night no longer had to go hunting for a telephone or start shouting from a housetop. All he had to do was go to the nearest fire alarm box and pull a lever.

Housewives of Fort Myers were given a big break by the new city commissioners. For years the women had lamented about being forced to cook over hot wood stoves or cranky kerosene ranges which habitually gave them trouble. They wanted modern gas stoves but their pleas for the installation of a gas plant fell upon deaf ears—until the new commissioners took office. They instructed Staley to ascertain how much the plant and distribution system would cost. He reported it could be done for \$130,000.

A proposed bond issue to provide that amount was presented to the voters on December 28, 1923, and was approved by a large majority. On the following March 4, the commissioners awarded a contract for the plant and system to the American Gas Construction Company. The work of building the plant and laying the gas mains was rushed to completion and gas was turned on for the first time Friday, December 26, 1924, providing Fort Myers women with a welcomed one-day-later Christmas present. The gas department was swamped by requests for service connections.

The commissioners were not satisfied with asking for just the \$130,000 at the December 28 election. They also asked the voters to approve bonds totalling \$70,000 for storm sewers, \$75,000 for sanitary sewers, \$80,000 for the water system, and \$90,000 for paving street intersections. All the bond issues were approved—\$445,000 worth, more bonds than had previously been issued in the entire history of the city.

Most of the improvements made possible by the bond issues were completed during 1924. At the same time, property owners obligated themselves to pay 90 per cent of the cost of paving approximately 23 miles of streets, money for them being obtained through the issuance of paving certificates. Ten per cent of the cost was borne by the city. Fort Myers was literally jerked out of the sand during that memorable year.

In that same year, the skyline of the city was changed by three new buildings which towered above their neighbors.

The first structure completed was the Morgan Hotel, started in 1923 by John Morgan Dean, of Providence, R. I., developer of Dean Park. It was constructed on the site of the Sanchez home, which Dean purchased. Before work on the hotel was started, Dean secured permission from the city commission to open Dean Street, thereby making it possible for the hotel to face on two streets.

The original Morgan Hotel, opened in January, 1924, contained only twenty-two rooms. During 1925, seventy more rooms were added and the "new" Morgan was opened November 27.

Fort Myers' first "skyscraper," an eight-story addition to the Franklin Arms Hotel, was completed by the owner, W. P. Franklin, in February, 1924, and opened on March 1. The addition, which contained 84 rooms, cost \$300,000. The Franklin Arms was an outgrowth of the old Hill House, long operated by Mrs. Mary F. Hill and later her daughter, M. Flossie Hill, which had been purchased by Franklin in 1918.

Franklin, a native of Virginia, had come to Fort Myers to live in 1913 and had become one of the city's leading citizens. He twice served as mayor and several times was president of the Board of Trade. A keen business man, he built up the largest hardware store south of Tampa.

A real old timer of Fort Myers, Albertus A. Gardner, was the builder of the third "skyscraper" completed in 1924—the four-story Pythian Building on Hendry Street now known as the Richards Building. The structure, which cost \$150,000, was erected to serve primarily as a home for Royal Palm Lodge No. 12, Knights of Pythias, in which Gardner had long been active.

Gardner was undoubtedly one of the foremost developers of Fort Myers. A native of Cleveland, he came to Fort Myers with his father and mother and sister in the early 1880s. With his father, he started the Seminole Canning Company and also planted a large orange grove. Later he built the town's first electric light plant. He also built the first ice plant. He died in the Tampa Hospital October 24, 1941 at the age of 83.

Another building, not of the skyscraper class but of the utmost importance to the city, was opened in 1924—on February 4. It was the new passenger station of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, built at a cost of \$110,000. Many of the leading dignitaries of Fort Myers were on hand at the new station when No. 83 rolled in and discharged its passengers.

"Outside money" began pouring into Fort Myers in a most pleasing manner during 1924. One of the leading spenders was a six-foot, slender, jovial native of Ann Arbor, Mich., who had earned wealth in the advertising business in New York City—George R. Sims.

As an avocation more than a business venture, Sims had taken a leading part in the development of New Port Richey shortly after the end of World War I. Late in 1923 he decided to travel down the West Coast and see what Fort Myers looked like. Chance took him into the office of L. C. Curtright, president of the Fort Myers Realty Company.

Introducing himself, Sims said he might be interested in buying some business building sites. Not being one to let business pass him by, Curt-right straightway proceeded to show Sims all over town and also tell him about Fort Myers' brilliant prospects for the future.

Completely sold on the city, the New York advertising man at once began buying choice sites in the business section, most of them located immediately west of the Tonnelier holdings. Within an 18-month period his purchases totalled \$950,000—in cash.

To Sims goes a large share of the credit for opening Broadway between First and Main. With Curtright and Henry Colquitt he acquired all the key properties in that neighborhood and in 1924 permission was granted by the city commissioners to open up the new thoroughfare, with the understanding that the city would not have to stand any of the expense. The new street was opened and paved early in 1925.

The section of Broadway between Main Street and Anderson Avenue, opened years before Sims came to town, was formerly known as Garrett Street. Old timers say it was given that name because a pioneer by the name of Garrett wore a path through the field there on his countless trips "down town" to chat with the boys.

The first building erected on the new Broadway was the Arcade, completed by Sims early in 1925 at a cost of \$125,000. It was constructed to serve as the post office and a large space in it was leased to the government, along with lock boxes and all equipment, for \$1 a year. Sims fixed the leasehold rate so low to get the post office as an attraction which would draw people down to the new business section he intended to create.

In addition to the post office quarters, the Arcade provided space for twenty stores and offices. All were rented, at fancy prices, before the building was completed. By that time office and store space in Fort Myers was at a premium, the demand being far greater than the space available. Real estate men were willing to pay sky-high rents even for tiny holes in the wall.

Henry Colquitt, a progressive real estate developer from Detroit, completed the attractive Colquitt Block on the northwest corner of Broadway and Main on October 28, 1925. All the other buildings facing on Broadway were erected by Sims. The three-story Kress Building on the northwest corner of First and Broadway, opened December 1, 1927, was constructed by Curtright, Frank C. Alderman, and John M. Dean. The building cost \$136,000 and was leased to the Kress Company for fifty years.

Sims and his associates of course were not the only builders during the epochal building boom of 1925-26. The Robb & Stucky Furniture Company erected its four-story building on Hendry in 1925 at a cost of \$50,000; the Elks Lodge completed its new home on First Street (now the American Legion Building) in October, 1925; Sykes & Hill, Ford dealers, erected a \$60,000 building on Main Street in 1925; the Fort Myers Realty Company built a \$24,000 two-story building at First and Dean; the Pavese brothers constructed the St. Charles Hotel at a cost of \$182,000 and the Edgewood School, costing \$161,300 was started late in 1925.

Outstanding buildings completed in 1926 included a \$100,000 addition to the Florida Power & Light Company plant; the \$75,000 Miles Building on McGregor Boulevard, erected by Dr. Franklin P. Miles; the \$60,000 Heverle Building at Main and Heitman; the \$80,000 Starnes Building in East Fort Myers, the \$25,000 Lee County Bank Building at

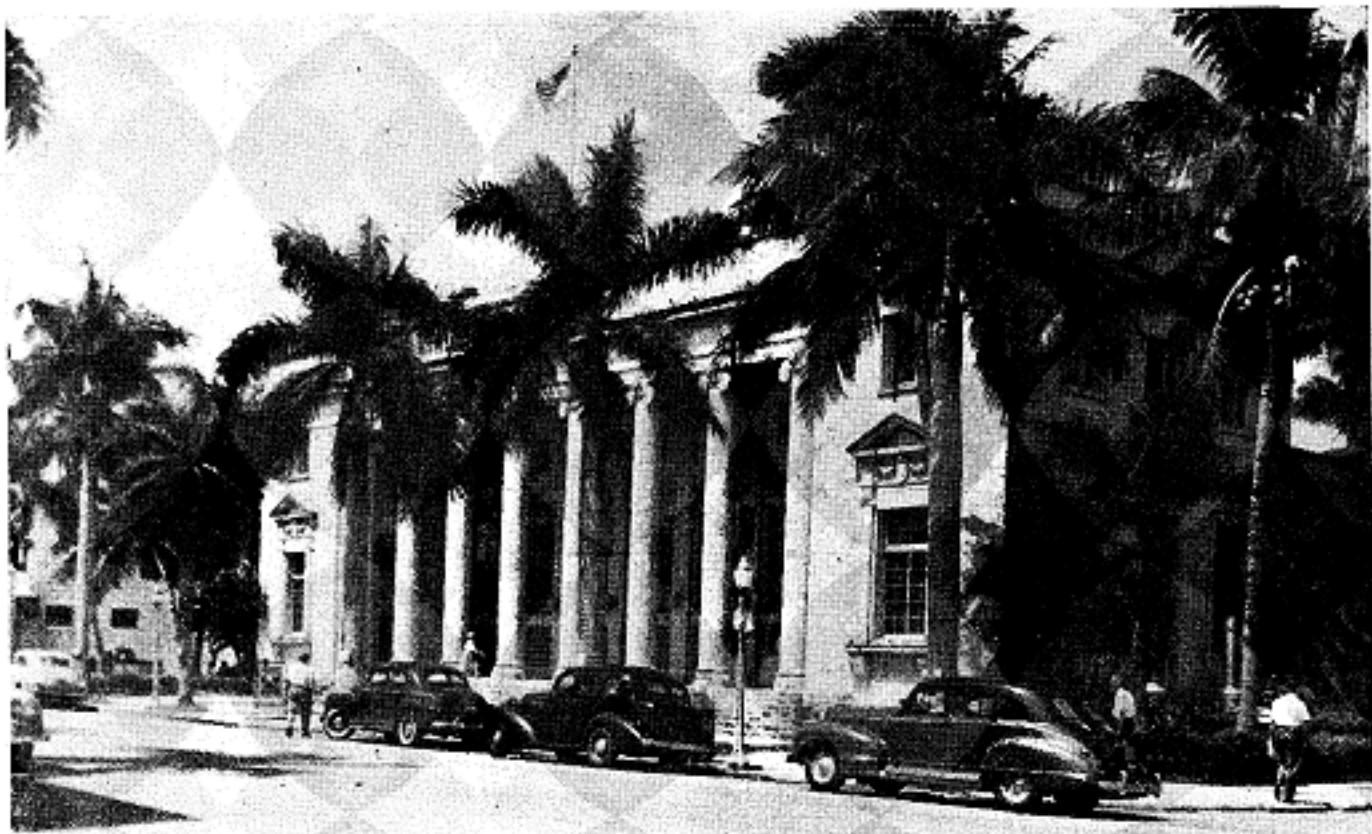
Hendry and Main, the \$30,000 Citizens Bank Building in East Fort Myers, and the Edison School, which with equipment cost \$250,000.

In addition to business buildings and schools, hundreds of houses were erected in all parts of Fort Myers during the phenomenal building spurt of the mid-Twenties. Also, there were churches, apartment houses, filling stations, garages, tourist courts, hot dog stands—structures of all kinds and for every purpose. Like magic, the city grew—and grew and grew.

The extent of the building spree was graphically shown by the record of building permits issued. During all of 1922 they amounted to only \$246,310. In 1923 they totalled \$463,895 and in 1924, \$502,750. Then the fireworks started. During 1925 the permits soared to the unbelievable total of \$2,794,075. That represented almost as much new building as had been done in the entire history of Fort Myers from the time the town was incorporated in 1885 up to 1920!

At the peak of the building boom the railroads declared an embargo on freight shipments to Florida. Thousands of freight cars had become jammed at bottleneck junction points and, in an attempt to unsnarl the tangle, the railroads put a ban on further shipments. But even the embargo did not stop Fort Myers' builders. They began bringing in vitally needed supplies on schooners and barges. Building materials were piled in small mountains on the docks.

The building boom continued undiminished during 1926. The permits that year totalled \$2,807,381, about \$14,000 more than the year before!



*Photo Courtesy of Lee County Chamber of Commerce*

The Fort Myers Post Office, erected in 1932.

*Gamblers Helped Build the City*

Outstanding men from all parts of the nation had a part in the development of Fort Myers during the boom days.

These men were as different from one another as any men could possibly be—in appearance and in background. But they had a number of things in common. They all had unbounded faith in Fort Myers, they all loved the city, and they all believed in doing things in a big way.

Moreover, they were all gamblers. They did not gamble at dice, or cards, or on the horses. They gambled on the future of Fort Myers. In the confident belief that the city would grow as it had never grown before, they gambled hundreds of thousands of dollars. Some of them lost everything they had. But regardless of whether they lost or won, they left their imprint on the city.

One of the first subdivisions opened during the Big Boom was developed by a nationally known millionaire from New York, State Senator C. A. Stadler, who had come to Fort Myers years before as a winter visitor. During the summer of 1922 Stadler let a contract for grading and paving the streets and laying water mains and sewers in Stadler Central Heights, a 60-acre tract south of the Coast Line tracks.

That was just the beginning of his activities. He later took a leading part in the development of Seminole Park and in the York Manor section of Riverside Park. Houses erected by him were among the finest in Fort Myers. His own home, built in 1926, was acclaimed one of the most beautiful on the West Coast. He also put Stadler's Farms on the market, five and ten-acre tracts which had an appeal to persons who wanted space to move around—and grow vegetables and fruits.

From St. Petersburg came one of the pioneer developers of the Sunshine City, C. Perry Snell, and his brother, G. E. Snell, an attorney. Together they developed some of the best subdivisions in the city: Valencia Terrace, Edison Park, Carlton Grove, Allen Park, Kingston Grove and Valencia Court. During 1925 and 1926 they built 71 residences at a cost of \$647,000. In addition, they spent \$1,250,000 on the subdivision developments and \$50,000 for the construction of the Snell Building at Bayview Court and First Street.

Riverside Subdivision was developed by a quartet of dyed-in-the-wool Fort Myers' boosters: Amos Bolick, of Burlington, Ia.; George W. Dunham, of Battle Creek, Mich.; A. L. White, of Wheeling, W. Va., and Dr. J. A. Baird, a retired physician who had made Fort Myers his year-round home.

Twin Palm Groves was developed by W. A. Faunce, of Chicago, at a cost of \$345,000. It was opened October 22, 1925, with the firm of Cavalli, Mathews & Lester acting as sales agents.

From the end of World War I up through the winter of 1924-25 there was a slow but steady rise in real estate values. Nothing spectacular—just an increase justified by the city's healthy growth.

But then the insanity began! Here, there and everywhere new "shoestring" subdivisions sprang up, like mushrooms in a sheep pasture

after a warm spring rain. Prices of lots started shooting up to fantastic heights. Tremendous profits were made. Real estate advertising filled the newspapers. But the real estate companies did not depend on advertising alone to sell their lots. They employed scores of salesmen. Most of the salesmen wore knickerbockers, according to the fashion of the day. Hence, they became known as the "knickerbocker boys." They came from all walks of life.

Here are some of the real estate subdivisions which carried full-page ads in the Fort Myers Press during 1925: Alabama Grove—"Will you wait until all this property is sold before you investigate? If you do, you will be the loser!" Palmwood, on Tamiami Trail at Pine Island Road, "it is without equal today and for the future." San Carlos, "oversubscribed \$986,000 at the September 28 opening—now watch for our great Bayshore Development." Russell Park, "In September we sold \$100,000 more lots than we did all last year."

Mecca Gardens, only five miles from the courthouse—"the city will be there before another year is ended; lots as low as \$1,000."

By the end of 1925 fantastic prices were being asked for lots in some of the established subdivisions: Valencia Terrace, \$4,400 to \$7,500; Highland Park, \$2,500 to \$2,750; Allen Park, \$6,000; Carlton Grove, \$5,500, and Rio Vista, \$5,000. The Palm City Realty Company offered a lot on Park Avenue just off First Street for the "remarkably low price of \$15,000." And Charles W. Russell advertised that when you bought lots in Russell Park you not only bought land "but a certain amount of surrounding atmosphere."

To get wealthy quickly, the real estate men strongly advised buying acreage. They had some choice bargains to offer. Charles W. Ross of the N. D. Suttles Company proudly announced that he could offer 6,080 acres in Collier County only eight miles from the Tamiami Trail (not yet opened) for the trifling sum of \$32 an acre. He also said he had the privilege of selling an 80-acre tract a half mile off McGregor Boulevard, only six miles from Fort Myers, for only \$100,000—just \$1,250 an acre. He had one more big bargain. For a limited time only, he announced, he could sell a "downtown" corner, only four blocks from First Street, for \$100,000.

The Nalle Realty Company also offered choice town lots in the business block at the new entrance to Edgewood, in East Fort Myers, for only \$6,500 each.

The Newman Williams Company had an extraordinary bargain to offer: "An opportunity that comes just once in a lifetime—150 acres on Sanibel Island at only \$1,600 an acre."

Of course people wanted to get property on option. To get their money, the Barnwell Realty Company advertised that for a 5 per cent binder, the choicest lots at San Carlos on the Gulf could be secured for 30 days—"and by that time the beach section will be selling as it never sold before."

A lush year for the real estate salesmen was 1925. Those who failed to make at least \$10,000 were considered rank failures. Many made

\$50,000 and more. Few of them, however, saved any money. They lived high, paid fantastic rents for swanky living quarters and, in many cases, invested most of their earnings in real estate. They really practiced what they preached—"buy real estate to become wealthy."

Part of the real estate profits went for liquor. Fort Myers was theoretically bone dry—but bootleggers did a thriving business. They could be reached by telephone any time during the day or night. They sold liquor by the truckload. That is, they got it in by the truckload—or boatload—and sold it out by pints, quarts, gallons or cases. For moonshine they got \$5 a gallon from their regular customers. Strangers had to pay more. The best grade of imported Canadian liquor was sold for \$6 a quart or \$55 a case. And the quarts were full quarts—not fifths. Bacardi rum sold for \$20 a gallon. In many cases liquor was cheaper than it is today. Even so, the bootleggers prospered.

But "good" won out over "evil." For every dollar the bootleggers got, at least five dollars went to the churches. Many denominations built fine new houses of worship and the pastors' salaries were raised to undreamed of levels. Evangelists who came to town also shared in the donations.

At the end of 1925 everyone was confident that the good times would never end. Announcement was made by the Heitman Estates that a million dollar, 10-story, 250-room hotel would be built "positively" within the next year on First Street between Lee and Jackson, where the U. S. Post Office later was erected. Provision would be made for adding 200 more rooms later, the announcement said.

Plans were announced by the Rotary Club for a fine new Y.M.C.A. building, to be financed by the club members. The First Methodist Episcopal Church also came forth with plans for a new church building to cost \$300,000. And the Chamber of Commerce began to have plans drawn for a million dollar community hotel.

The Chamber of Commerce now held undisputed possession of top place among organizations formed to boost the city. Evil days had fallen upon the old Board of Trade. Its decline began shortly after the close of World War I. Newcomers to Fort Myers, as well as some of the old timers, decided it was not progressive enough to serve a live, growing city so they formed a new organization, the Accelerator Club. Its membership was limited to 36 men under 36 years of age.

Members of the new club were real live wires. Some of the most active members were H. C. Case, R. A. Henderson, Jr., Harry Stucky, Dave Ireland, Channing Page, Ed Page, Virgil C. Robb, H. C. Williamson, Harold Burt, Douglas Warner, Ely McCord, John Mohl, Allen Powell, Ted Evans, Morehouse Stevens, Millard Roach, C. Q. Stewart, R. Vivian Lee, S. Watt Lawler, Dick Boyd, Ed Ashmead, Dave Wilkins, Harry K. Davison, Bob Battey and C. C. Pursley.

Next came the Boosters Club, headed by Francis W. Perry. Later the Fifty Thousand Club was formed with Henry Colquitt as one of the moving spirits. The Chamber of Commerce came into being during 1922

as a result of the squabbling over whether the Dixie Highway or the Tamiami Trail should be given preference in highway construction. The old Board fought for the Dixie Highway; the Chamber fought for the Trail. When the battle finally ended the two factions buried the hatchet and merged into one organization, the Chamber.

During the Boom days, and the less glamorous days which followed, the Chamber continued to carry the torch for a bigger and better Fort Myers.

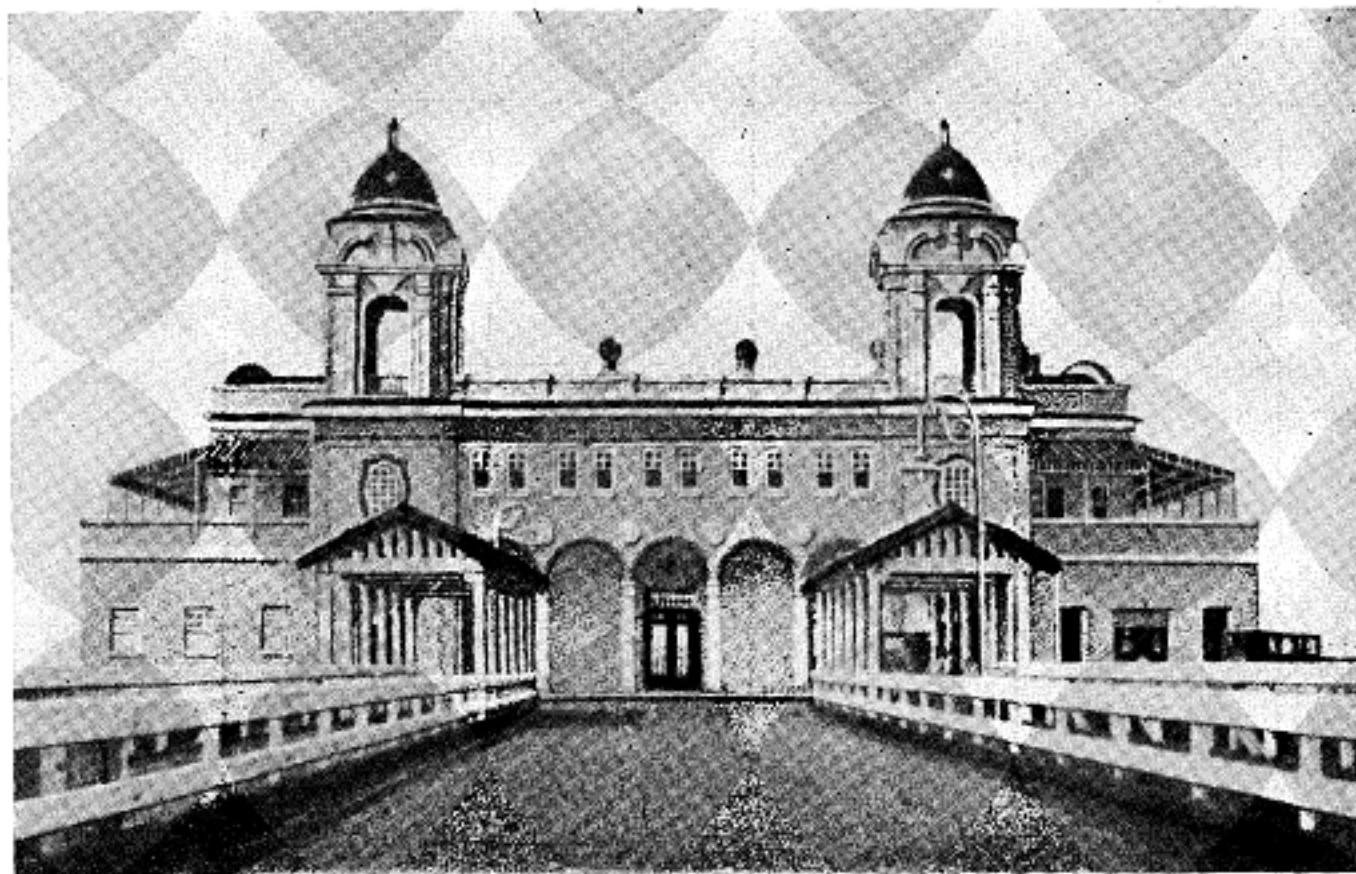
#### *Barron Collier Gets a County*

Of all the celebrities who had a hand in Lee County affairs during the Big Boom, no one cut half as wide a swath as the multi-millionaire street car advertising magnate of New York City, Barron G. Collier.

Husky in build, white haired and suave, Collier had a way of making his millions get to work.

His first visit to Lee County was made in 1911 at the request of his friend John M. Roach, president of the Chicago Street Railway Company, who then owned Useppa Island and a 200-acre citrus grove at Deep Lake, far in the Big Cypress. Taking a liking to Useppa Island, with the famous lodge which Roach had developed, Collier bought it for \$100,000 on August 10, 1911.

Large though this purchase was, Collier was not satisfied. He wanted a vast domain which he could call his very own. Cruising up and



*Photo Courtesy of Capt. A. L. Kinzie*

For nearly two decades the pavilion at the end of Fort Myers pleasure pier served as the city's community center—it was torn down in 1943 and material from it was used in the construction by the Army of a social center for soldiers in Waterfront Park.

down the lower coast, he acquainted himself with the back country and conceived the idea of acquiring the holdings of large land companies in southern Lee County.

On April 4, 1921, he purchased the Deep Lake Grove from Roach and the estate of Walter G. Langford, a part owner. He also bought a 13-mile railroad which connected the grove with tidewater. A year later, in April, 1922, he bought 750,000 acres from the Southern States Land & Development Company. He made another large purchase on May 3, 1923, increasing his holdings to more than a million acres.

Desiring to proceed with the development of his holdings in his own way, Collier took steps to persuade the state legislature to create a new county in southern Lee. To do this he sought the assistance of Robert A. Henderson, Sr., of Fort Myers.

Henderson was elected state representative in 1922 after a stiff fight with H. A. "Berry" Hendry in a campaign in which the division of Lee County was the principal issue. Henderson stood for division; Hendry was opposed to it. But in the campaign no mention was made of creating a county for Collier. The tussle pertained entirely to the creation of Hendry County out of the 35 northeastern townships of Lee, with LaBelle to be the county seat.

Henderson won by a narrow margin, 733 to 704. He lost Fort Myers 173 to 319 but he won sweeping victories in other key sections. He carried Immokolee 21 to 6, LaBelle 158 to 6, Caxambas 21 to 1, Clewiston 41 to 1 and at Marco he made a clean sweep, getting all of the 26 votes cast. Analysis of the vote indicates that the voters of southern Lee, as well as those of northeastern Lee, were dissatisfied with the rule of the "courthouse crowd" in Fort Myers. Lee County's failure to provide an adequate road system undoubtedly had a bearing on the results.

In asking Henderson to favor the creation of a county in southern Lee, Collier offered strong inducements. He promised to stand the entire expense of building the Tamiami Trail through the property he owned and use his influence to get it extended from coast to coast. Inasmuch as work on the Trail in that area had been barely started and since no one knew where money was to be obtained to complete the project, Collier's offer was almost irresistible and Henderson decided that it would be folly to turn it down. So when the division measure came before the state legislature in the spring of 1923, he favored it and Collier County came into existence on July 9. Hendry County was created at the same time. It was named in honor of Capt. F. A. Hendry, pioneer South Florida booster.

Following the creation of Collier County, Collier proceeded rapidly with the development of the townsite of Everglades, the county seat. To provide transportation for the tiny community, then almost completely isolated, he formed the Florida Railroad & Navigation Company, bought out the Fort Myers Steamship Company which had been started some years before by I. W. Riggs and Harry Botts, and established headquarters in Fort Myers, taking over the purchased company's wharf, warehouse and offices. This establishment was renamed the Collier Terminal.

The Collier Line, as it was commonly known, started off with the "City of Everglades." It was purchased primarily to serve Everglades but outside firms provided it with good business from the start. Collier later added to his "fleet" the "City of Tampa," the "City of Punta Gorda," the "City of Fort Myers" and finally the "City of Punta Blanca."

The Collier Terminal was destroyed by fire on July 11, 1926. A new terminal was then built on the site of the old one. It was completed February 1, 1927. Completion of good highways and truck competition finally put the Collier Line out of business, late in the '20s.

Collier also was the founder of Tamiami Trail Tours. This bus company, now one of the largest transportation companies in the South, was an outgrowth of a line started to connect Everglades with Fort Myers. Before the Tamiami Trail was completed, the bus ran to Marco where connections were made with a steamer which ran to Everglades. In 1925, Collier's outfit purchased the Gulf-Atlantic Transportation Company, which provided cross-state service. In early 1926 the South Florida Bus Service, which ran busses to Sarasota and Lakeland, was absorbed. Later, other transportation companies were acquired and service was widely extended.



*Photo Courtesy of Lee County Chamber of Commerce*

The Atlantic Coast Line Depot where many winter visitors get their first view of Fort Myers.

To provide telephone service for his domain, Collier in 1924 bought the Lee County Telephone Company and four other companies in south Florida. Exchanges were established at Fort Myers, Punta Gorda, Arcadia, Everglades, Immokalee, LaBelle, Moore Haven and six other towns, thereby serving twelve counties and having toll lines extending from the Atlantic at Fort Pierce to various points on the West Coast.

Early in 1922 Collier purchased practically all of Marco Island which had been first settled by Capt. W. D. Collier in 1871. In 1926, the San Marco Corporation surveyed the north end of the island for a town site and subdivided it into 525 lots. Grandiose plans for the development of a city were made and in 1927 the state legislature granted a charter which incorporated the entire island under the name Collier City. Because of the bursting of the Florida bubble, Collier City never materialized.

#### *Head Over Heels into Debt*

Fort Myers' faith in the future was unlimited and its enthusiasm was unbounded during the golden, glittering, glamorous year of 1925.

The city was growing as it had never grown before. More people poured in every day—real estate men, carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, doctors, lawyers, clerks, laborers—men and women from every walk of life. Every hotel, every rooming house was filled to overflowing. Houses could not be built fast enough to take care of the demand.

No one knew exactly how much the city had grown in population. The federal census of 1920 had shown 3,678 inhabitants, a gain of 1,215 over 1910, but everyone was positive that by 1925 the total had leaped to at least 15,000. Many said confidently that it was closer to 20,000 or even 25,000.

The exact population gain was uncertain but there was no uncertainty about the prosperity of the city. The banks fairly dripped with money. Their deposits had leaped from a trivial \$340,667 in 1910 and an unimpressive \$1,175,414 at the close of World War I to a glorious total of \$5,697,442—and they kept mounting all the time.

The city had spread out in all directions, miles up and down the river and far to the south. To keep pace with the growth, the city limits had been extended several times. At the beginning of 1925 the town's boundaries enclosed 1,900 acres. But the boom-time subdividers, whose properties lay far beyond the existing boundaries, insisted that the city limits should be extended farther—much, much farther. Only by getting their properties inside the city limits could they get water, sewers, gas and other public improvements with the city guaranteeing payment of the expense.

Hearkening to the seductive pleas of the subdividers, the city commissioners asked the state legislature to amend the Fort Myers city charter to permit the annexing of more territory. The amendment went through and the acreage within the city limits was soon ballooned from 1,900 to 15,000! Overnight, Fort Myers increased eight times in size!

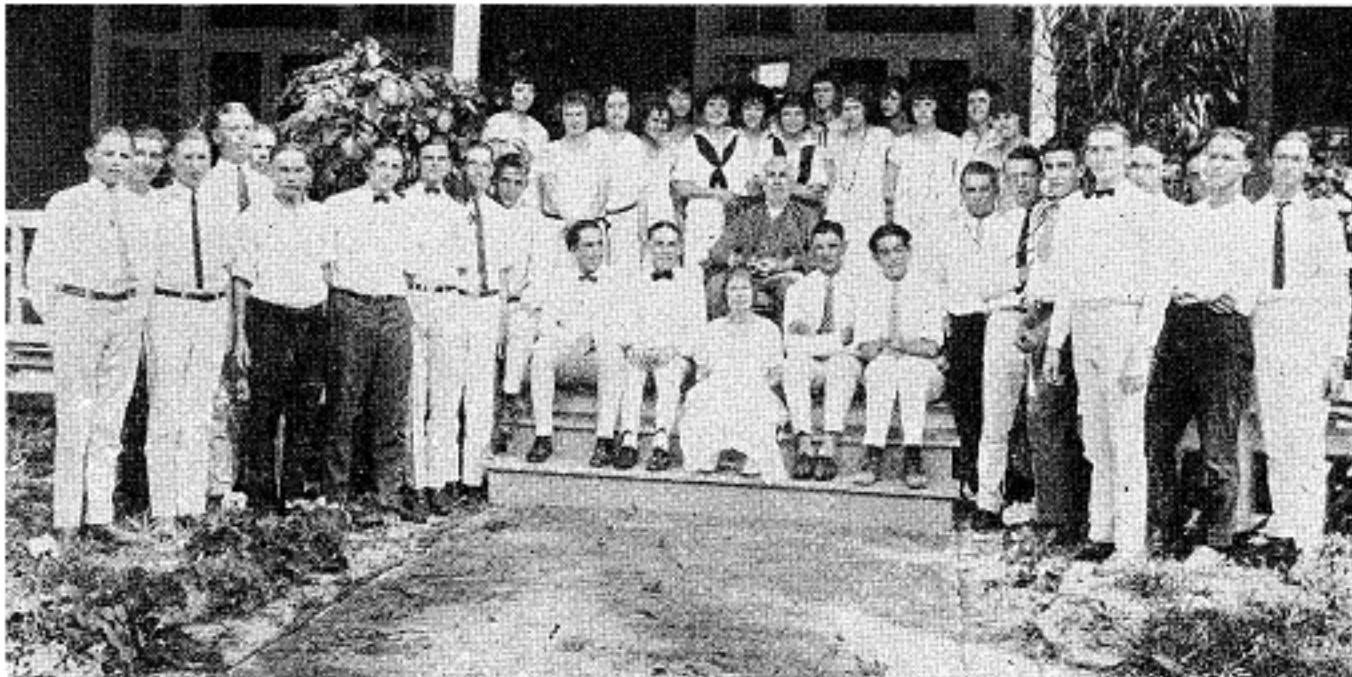
The obliging city commissioners thereupon proceeded to take care of the subdividers' needs in a generous manner. They called an election and asked the voters to approve bond issues totalling \$3,500,000, eight times as large as the previous record breaking issue of \$445,000 approved December 28, 1923. Breathtaking though the new request was, it was approved by a handsome majority—the voters then were in no mood to quibble. What were a couple of million more or less? To get work started, the commissioners sold \$1,750,000 worth of bonds—half of the approved issue. They were dated April 1, 1926.

This was the way the bond money was to be spent: sewers, \$800,000; water, \$400,000; playgrounds, \$220,000; gas, \$160,000; fire, \$125,000, and incinerator, \$45,000. Total, \$1,750,000.

People who fretted about the city's mounting bonded debt always were reminded by the optimists of what Thomas A. Edison had said about Fort Myers back in 1914. Predicted the electrical wizard: "There is only one Fort Myers and 90,000,000 people are going to find this out."

Edison was now coming to Fort Myers each winter to live in his beautiful Seminole Lodge on McGregor Boulevard. His friend, Henry Ford, had purchased the place next to him on June 6, 1916, paying \$20,000, and also came regularly each winter. Their annual visits gave Fort Myers priceless publicity.

Edison did not waste his time while in Fort Myers. He had built a laboratory on his property, brought in a staff of expert technicians, and kept busy trying to find a plant which would yield rubber on a paying basis. American tire manufacturers, then at the mercy of the British-Dutch rubber cartel, were backing Edison in his experiments and the national press was giving great publicity to his efforts. All of which kept Fort Myers much in the national limelight.



*Photo Courtesy of R. Q. Richards*

Thomas A. Edison presented diplomas to members of the 1929 graduating class of Fort Myers High School.

The city also was getting fine publicity on the sports pages of the nation. As a result of the efforts of R. Q. Richards, then president of the Kiwanis Club, Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics were coming to Fort Myers each year for spring training at Terry Park, donated to the county in 1906 by Mrs. Tootie McGregor Terry. The Athletics always made the headlines, win or lose, because of colorful Connie Mack and of course Fort Myers shared in the publicity.

Another kind of publicity, much less desired, came as a result of the hurricane of September 18, 1926, one of the worst in the history of Fort Myers. In comparison with the damage done by the storm at Miami, around Lake Okeechobee and at many other places, Fort Myers escaped lightly, but even so, the blow was bad enough.

The storm began late Friday, September 17, and increased in intensity all night and the next morning, reaching its peak in mid-afternoon. Buildings in Fort Myers were unroofed and a few were blown down by the wind which attained a velocity of 75 miles an hour. Four automobiles were blown from the docks and many trees toppled over.

The worst damage was done along the gulf where the only loss of life occurred. Waves passed entirely over Punta Rassa, sweeping away all the buildings except the cable station. The last to leave the point were Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Bradley, who owned the Punta Rassa store, Mrs. James J. McCool and a sister of Mrs. Bradley. Their car was swamped by the rising water. Mr. and Mrs. Bradley escaped by climbing a tree but Mrs. McCool and the other woman drowned. Two children also drowned at Pine Island. The Thomas Casino and many cottages on Estero Island were destroyed and the Fort Myers Beach bridge was wrecked.

#### *Then Came the Morning After*

There is no doubt but that the hurricane of September 18, 1926, marked the end of the Florida boom so far as Fort Myers was concerned.

Many persons said that the storm caused the bursting of the gorgeously radiant prosperity bubble. More analytical observers agreed, however, that the crash would have come even if the weather had remained ideal. There is good evidence that the bubble had been punctured months before hurricane clouds darkened the horizon and that the high winds merely blew away the last fond hopes of the starry-eyed optimists that the boom would continue forever.

Real estate sales had started to fall off alarmingly early in the year. But salesmen said that the market was "adjusting itself." They also blamed the chill winds and dismal skies which plagued Florida in January, 1926. When the bad weather ended and the sun blazed forth again in all its glory sales picked up a little. But salesmen had to work harder than ever before to get prospects to sign on the dotted line. By spring, veteran real estate men sensed that something was definitely wrong and by fall even the most unobserving were forced to realize the speculative boom was over.

The crash would have been recognized much earlier had it not been for the fact that building activities continued at a boom level through almost the entire year. To handle the work, building trades craftsmen remained in the city and stores continued to do a good business. But by October real estate advertising had disappeared almost completely from the newspapers, a sure sign that the boom market had ended.

Few persons were ready to admit, however, that disaster was imminent. The city commissioners continued with its program of public improvements, spending bond money to put down sewers and gas water mains in subdivisions where no lots had been sold for weeks.

Late in the year the commissioners awarded contracts for the construction of a new city recreation pier at Evans Park to cost \$58,236, a splendid municipal auditorium at the end of the pier to cost \$47,552, and a municipal bathing pool to cost \$22,882. All three were completed in the spring of 1927.

Determined to attract enough tourists to keep the city moving along, the Chamber of Commerce spent \$22,172 for a newspaper and magazine advertising campaign during the winter of 1926-27.

Despite all attempts to keep the boom a-booming, it was obvious to everyone by late November that there was no hope of re-blowing the super-dooper prosperity bubble. Most of the members of the knickerbocker army had packed their bags and departed long before. Now the building trades craftsmen also began moving out. Laborers left and so did clerks, and stenographers, and professional men. Day after day the exodus continued.

Prices of all kinds of property plunged downward at a sickening pace. To save something from the wreckage, everyone tried to sell his holdings—but there were mighty few buyers, even at give-away prices. The crash hit Fort Myers a terrific blow. Many persons lost their life's savings; hundreds were so heavily burdened by debts that they did not get back on their feet again until years later. Many business firms went bankrupt. Scores of houses, apartments, business buildings and hotels were sold at sacrifice prices to satisfy mortgages.

When the effects of the boom intoxication began to wear off, Fort Myers looked around in sort of a bewildered daze and started taking stock of its assets and liabilities.

On the debit side of the ledger, people found many unpleasant facts. The worst was the city's heavy load of bonded indebtedness. Fort Myers had been far more conservative than other cities of comparable size in peninsular Florida and if the reaction to the boom had not been so severe, the city probably could have retired the bonds without difficulty. Even as it was, bond payments were continued until disaster struck the entire country during the Great Depression.

The worst immediate effect of the crash was the depression of real estate values. Fort Myers had undoubtedly overbuilt and years passed before the demand again caught up with the supply. As a result, prices were kept at an abnormally low level—and everyone suffered except the few who were able to buy at the bargain prices.

On the credit side of the ledger, Fort Myers found many things to be thankful for.

Perhaps the greatest windfall of the boom was an excellent system of modern, fireproof school buildings. Four excellent buildings were constructed during the lush Twenties: the high school which with equipment cost \$224,500; the Edgewood School, \$161,300; Edison Park School, \$250,650, and the Tice Grammar School, \$175,000. At the end of the boom the eight schools then in the city were valued at \$1,844,755. Many excellent schools also were constructed throughout the county.

Because of the boom, Fort Myers also got many miles of badly needed paved streets and sidewalks, a greatly enlarged water system, a gas plant which had long been wanted, modern fire fighting apparatus, a city-wide sewerage system, a municipal pier and auditorium, and a municipal bathing pool. All these things might have come even though there had not been a boom but undoubtedly they would have been long delayed.

Far more important than anything else, the Big Boom also assured completion of the Tamiami Trail, made possible the reclamation of the invaluable Iona farming district, and caused officials of the Seaboard Railroad to complete plans for extending tracks into the Fort Myers district.

These fruits of the boomer days were to have a profound effect upon the future of the city. And, as they ripened, Fort Myers had ample reason for looking ahead with confidence, even though the collapse of the boom had dealt the city a grievous blow.



## CHAPTER VIII

### UP AGAIN—THEN DOWN—THEN UP AGAIN

DYNAMIC AND FAR-SIGHTED PRESIDENT of the Seaboard Air Line Railway System, S. Davies Warfield, had unlimited faith in the future of southwest Florida. He demonstrated that faith during the bleak summer and autumn of 1926 after even the most optimistic had been forced to realize that the beautiful Florida bubble had finally burst.

Instead of retrenching as others were doing, Warfield issued orders for work to be rushed on an extension of the Seaboard to Fort Myers. The ending of the speculative boom did not disturb him—he was convinced that southwest Florida would continue to forge ahead, crash or no crash, and he wanted to place the Seaboard in a position where it could profit from the forthcoming development. He had no intention of allowing his arch competitor, the Coast Line, to monopolize the business indefinitely—so he acted accordingly.

Warfield's plans did not provide for merely laying tracks to Fort Myers. They also provided for building an extension up the river to LaBelle, another down the coast to Naples, and a third to Punta Rassa.

At Punta Rassa, Warfield intended to do great things. He confidently believed he could develop that cattle shipping point of bygone days into one of the leading port cities of Florida, greater even than Tampa. He envisioned the day when the harbor there would be packed with ships from Central and South America and thriving industries would be kept busy handling imports.

The Seaboard president did not publicize the fact that he intended to go below the Caloosahatchee. Had he done so, he would have had to pay fancy prices for the necessary right-of-way, particularly so since much of the land required was held by friends of the Atlantic Coast Line. So he proceeded quietly, disclosing his plans to only a few trusted friends.

James E. Hendry, Jr., played an important role in the land-purchasing deals. Operating as Warfield's personal representative, he purchased practically all the right-of-way required without letting anyone know why he was buying the land.

To hasten completion of its extensions, the Seaboard put more than five hundred men to work during the last half of 1926. The tracks were laid to Fort Myers on November 24 and two days later the first Seaboard freight train arrived in the city. By December 23 the Naples extension was completed.

Fort Myers celebrated in glorious fashion when the first passenger train arrived on January 7, 1927, bringing with it President Warfield,

Governor John W. Martin and six hundred guests of the Seaboard railroad. Speeches of welcome were made by Mayor Frank Kellow and S. O. Godman, president of the Chamber of Commerce, and two hundred autos were on hand to take visitors on trips through the city. To commemorate the occasion, the Tropical News put out a special edition of nearly 100 pages, chockful of advertising and good wishes to the Seaboard.

Regular passenger service was begun by the railroad on January 8, two trains arriving and departing daily, the West Coast Limited and the Orange Blossom Special. During the same month, January, the Seaboard passenger station was completed at a cost of \$75,000 and the freight station at a cost of \$66,000.

Tracks to LaBelle were laid in February and to Punta Rassa soon afterward. But Warfield's dream of developing Punta Rassa into a great port city never materialized. Because of his untimely death—and the Great Depression—the Seaboard soon forgot Punta Rassa existed.

In an attempt to keep one step ahead of the Seaboard, the Atlantic Coast Line in 1927 extended its tracks from Bonita Springs twenty-eight miles south to Collier City on the island of Marco. The road to Bonita Springs had been built in 1923 by the Fort Myers Southern Railroad, a subsidiary of the A.C.L. headed by Frank C. Alderman, Sr.

Important though the railroad extensions were to southwest Florida in 1927 they were destined to be soon eclipsed by a ribbon of asphalt which, when unwound, bridged the once impenetrable Glades and linked Fort Myers with Miami—the famous Tamiami Trail.

#### *The Tamiami Trail Is Completed*

Way back in 1914 when European nations were getting started in the grim business of mass murder, highway enthusiasts of South Florida began dreaming of the day when Tampa, Fort Myers and Miami would be connected by a road passable at all seasons of the year.

The dreamed-of road was called the Tamiami Trail.

The first bond issues to make the Trail a reality were approved in 1915 by Lee and Dade counties. But the issues were so small that the money was all spent before the highway was even half started.

Then came seemingly endless arguments regarding what route should be followed through the swamps and marshes of the Glades, and more arguments regarding the best method of raising the necessary money. Then the United States entered World War I—and the Trail was temporarily forgotten.

After the war, work on the Trail north of Fort Myers was pushed ahead steadily. But south of Fort Myers little progress was made, particularly on the cross-state section.

To focus public attention on the Glades portion of the Trail, a small band of good roads boosters left Fort Myers on Wednesday, April 4, 1923,

determined to drive through to Miami. On the second day out their automobiles became mired in the swamps; thereafter, progress was measured by yards instead of by miles. The Trail Blazers became lost. Airplanes were sent out to search for them. Three weeks passed before the party reached Miami, foot-sore, weary and hungry, and minus three of the ten cars which started the journey.

The names of the intrepid adventurers must be preserved. They were: W. Stanley Hanson, F. C. Garmon, Cyril Shawcross, R. W. Giles, L. J. Van Duyl, George Dunham, Milton Thompson, Ora E. Chapin, J. W. Hill, Grover Hackney, L. A. Whitney, C. P. Corrigan, Clark Taylor, F. B. Hough, and Maurice Ayer, of Fort Myers; Frank Whitman and Russell Kay, of Tampa; A. H. Andrews, Alfred Christensen, F. S. Lewis and Charles H. Hunt, of Estero; George B. Prime, of Sarasota; John P. Cosden, of Easton, Md., and George P. Smith, of Everglades. With these white men went two Seminole Indian guides, Assumhachee and Cornapatchee.

The achievement of the Trail Blazers was chronicled in detail by newspapers throughout the country and gave the Trail priceless publicity—but it did not greatly accelerate construction work. Even after the bridge across the Caloosahatchee was opened on March 13, 1924, (see Chapter VII), progress on the Glades section was made with agonizing slowness. Not until the Trail was taken over by the State Road Department in 1926 was work speeded up.



*Photo Courtesy of Lee County Chamber of Commerce*

Downtown Fort Myers as it looked in 1945.

Finally, however, in April, 1928, the Highway was completed—at a cost of \$9,000,000. It was officially opened April 26, 1928. Fort Myers celebrated as it had never celebrated before. The town was thrown open to the hundreds of highway enthusiasts who joined in a motocade from Tampa to Miami. The hotels were crowded. Speeches of welcome were made by Dr. Fons A. Hathaway, chairman of the State Road Department; Harry J. Wood, chairman of the Fort Myers general committee; John E. Morris, chairman of the county commissioners; W. Stanley Hanson, one of the original Trail Blazers; Mayor Elmer E. Hough; Baron G. Collier, who spent nearly a million dollars on the Collier County section of the road; Senator Edgar Waybright, of the Gulf Coast Highway Association, and Assumhachee, Seminole Indian guide.

Highway enthusiasts had something else to be thankful for in 1928. A new bridge was constructed over Mantanzas Pass connecting Fort Myers Beach with the mainland. It was built to replace the wooden structure which had been washed out in the hurricane of September, 1926, and later flimsily rebuilt. A new highway to the beach, providing a shorter route, was constructed during 1926-27. With the new highway and the new bridge, Fort Myers Beach entered into a new phase of development.

#### *Politicians Have Their Woes*

Completion of Seaboard extensions below the Caloosahatchee aided greatly in boosting the morale of crash-stricken Fort Myers during 1927. So did the news that the State Road Department was putting the final touches on the Tamiami Trail. Even the most despondent victims of the boom-bursting began to perk up and look toward the future with a less jaundiced eye.

Because of the partially restored confidence, few persons objected when the city purchased the Fort Myers Golf & Yacht Club in the fall of 1927 and went into the golfing business.

The club had had a hectic existence. Founded in 1906 it built a club house and a golf course of sorts in East Fort Myers. But it soon passed out of existence, due principally to the fact that bad roads made it next to impossible for members to get to the club house. An attempt to revive the club was made in 1914 by J. D. Lynn and R. H. Cates but World War I stymied their efforts.

After the war, when the first exhilarating effects of the Florida Boom began to be felt, the town leaders joined together in a concerted drive to provide Fort Myers with a club house and golf course which would be a credit to the up-and-coming city. A whirlwind membership drive was held, a fine tract of land was purchased, Donald Ross was employed to construct a course, and a club house was built. During the Boom, the club fared quite well but when the crash came it soon got into financial difficulties. In July, 1927, the club officials glumly informed the city commissioners that the city would have to come to the rescue if it didn't want to see the club pass into oblivion.

The city fathers mulled over the problem week after week. They did not want to put the city farther into debt but neither did they want Fort Myers to become a winter resort city which lacked a golf course where its sports-loving guests could amuse themselves. So on August 29, 1927, they purchased the club's property for \$165,000—\$9,000 in cash, \$106,000 in time warrants, and the city to assume a \$50,000 mortgage held by Dr. M. O. Terry.

Operation of the club was turned over by the commissioners to a golf committee which proceeded to make the golf course one of the leading assets of the city. For a few years during World War II the club made money but usually the expenditures slightly exceeded receipts. However, Fort Myers continued to have a good golf course, and club house, and that's all that really counted.

In another move to make Fort Myers more attractive to winter visitors, and to home folks as well, the commission in September, 1928, contracted for 6,954 trees to be planted on the city streets. The contract was awarded to James E. Hendry, Jr., owner of Everglades Nursery, who offered to supply the trees and plant them for \$26,000, payments to be made over a five year period.

Carrying out the contract, Hendry planted 1,214 coconut palms, 2,232 cocos plumoso, and many Australian pines, Australian oaks, and royal palms. It was the largest street beautification program ever attempted by any community in southwest Florida and attracted wide attention. The plantings extended 37 miles on 67 streets.

After the summer of 1928 the city commissioners gave little thought to more improvements for Fort Myers. They were kept busy trying to defend themselves against charges of everything except high treason hurled at them by a disgruntled public.

The commissioners' troubles dated back to Boom days when almost everyone in Fort Myers wanted improvements of all sorts—and to heck with the cost. To pay for the improvements, bond issue after bond issue was approved by overwhelming majorities. But when the crash came, and taxes had to be increased to meet the bond payments, heartrending lamentations were heard at every hand.

The commissioners were accused of all sorts of things—senseless extravagance, waste, inefficiency and so forth and so on. The public's ire was directed particularly at Commissioner A. B. Cutter, an ex-Army major who had served as city manager in 1925 and had been zealous in pushing costly improvements in out-in-the-sticks subdivisions which by 1928 had become overgrown with weeds. Many voters also were peeved at Mayor Elmer Hough and Commissioner Clinton Bolick because they attempted to defend Cutter's deeds, saying he had given Fort Myers only what the voters had demanded. Petitions to recall all three were circulated and enough angered voters signed to necessitate a recall election on August 31. Cutter escaped by only two-thirds of a vote; the others by slightly larger margins.

Getting a little revenge, the commissioners then proceeded to fire the city manager, C. P. Staley. They said he was the cause of most of the dissension. Lester H. Baker was appointed to succeed Staley, as acting manager.

Ousting of Staley did not end the commissioners' troubles. More petitions demanding recall of the officials—this time, all five of them—were circulated and another election was called for October 2. The commissioners escaped, but by slim margins.

Unable to unseat the commissioners via the recall route, the irate public then demanded that they should be dispensed with by changing the city charter, abolishing the city manager-commissioner form of government and going back to the councilmanic form. This was done by the State Legislature in April, 1929. Fort Myers had had a city manager for eight years—and that was enough.

The first election under the revised charter was held July 19, 1929. The contest for mayor developed into a free for all, with four men seeking the office. William J. Wood was elected, getting 955 votes. J. H. Fitch received 827 votes; S. O. Godman, 115, and C. L. Starnes, 13. To add to the merriment, someone cast a ballot for Henry Ford. Councilmen elected were Holland McCormick, Virgil C. Robb, F. E. Forehand and Martin E. Shultz. Nell Barden was elected city clerk, collector and treasurer; C. J. Raby, tax assessor, and E. Dixie Beggs, municipal judge.

After 1929 the people of Fort Myers had something else to worry about besides politics—the Great Depression.

#### *Then Came the Great Depression*

Fort Myers' hopes of recovering quickly from the effects of the collapse of the Florida Boom were shattered by the devastating stock market crash of October, 1929. Before the year ended stock losses throughout the nation totalled fifteen billion dollars. The United States began to be paralyzed, economically and psychologically. And with each passing year the paralysis became more severe.

During the depression, Fort Myers at no time had an unemployment problem comparable to that of great northern industrial cities. But even so, the problem was bad enough. Building activities had come to a dead halt, throwing many men out of work. The citrus industry was badly hit—the demand for oranges and grapefruit became so small that many growers let their fruit rot on the trees. Prices for vegetables dropped so low that farmers could not get their money back. The cattle industry was crippled. The number of winter visitors dropped sharply.

Fort Myers was dealt a staggering blow on April 16, 1931, when the Bank of Fort Myers and Trust Company closed its doors—and never reopened. Depositors had \$618,755 in the bank. Fred A. Hubbard was named liquidator. He was succeeded in 1933 by M. A. Smith. Liquidation of the bank was not completed until 1939. Depositors received 59.5 per cent of their proven claims.

Because of the depression, Fort Myers lost one of its newspapers during 1931, the Tropical News being merged with the Fort Myers Press to form the Fort Myers News-Press. Both papers had prospered during the Boom but had lost steadily during the lean years which followed, and the depression made their position even more precarious. Deciding that it would be better for Fort Myers to have one strong paper than two weak ones, the owners of the papers arranged to consolidate. Carl Hanton, editor and publisher of the Tropical News, became publisher and editor of the News-Press. (See Index: Newspapers.)

As the depression continued, conditions in Fort Myers became steadily worse, just as they did everywhere throughout the nation. Tax payments dropped so low that the city could no longer make payments on outstanding bonds, totaling about three million dollars, and it began to be plagued with mandamus actions.

Fort Myers was dealt another blow on July 18, 1932, when the Lee County Bank and Trust Company closed its doors, unable longer to meet depositors' demands for cash. Several wealthy stockholders came to the rescue and the bank was reopened on August 28 but only after all except 20 per cent of deposits were frozen. After the banking moratorium of March, 1933, the bank was reorganized as the Lee County Bank. The old depositors finally received 46.52 per cent of their deposits, but not until long afterward.

The First National Bank also had grievous troubles. It was unable to reopen after the bank moratorium and was placed in the hands of



*Photo Courtesy of Lee County Chamber of Commerce*

Downtown Fort Myers as it looks from above the Caloosahatchee.

Frank C. Alderman, conservator. Its unsecured deposits then totalled \$391,921.95. Finally, on June 13, 1934, an entirely new bank was organized, the First National Bank in Fort Myers, and depositors of the old bank received 50 per cent of their claims. Assets of the old bank were liquidated by three trustees: George Kingston, Fred A. Hubbard and Harry M. McWhorter.

The closing of all the city's banks during the national bank crisis tied up more than a million dollars of depositors' money and almost paralyzed business activities. Fort Myers dropped lower and lower in the slough of despondency.

By the spring of 1935 the city was in desperate straits. Tax collections amounted to only 35 per cent of the total due; not enough money was coming into the city's coffers to pay employees' salaries, to say nothing of making payments on city bonds or setting up funds for work relief projects.

To raise money, David Shapard resorted to drastic measures after he was elected mayor in March, 1935. Backed by an able, courageous council, he threatened to cut off all city services from properties on which taxes were unpaid—sewers, water, gas and even fire protection. Each day he gave out the names of ten delinquent property owners who would be deprived of city services on the same day the following week. Names were published in the News-Press—on Page One. The reaction was swift and terrific. Many of the exposed delinquents were outraged and said Shapard should be driven out of town. But he stuck by his guns—the delinquents paid up, and the city kept operating. Shapard's plan attracted national attention. It was adopted by few other cities, not because it wouldn't work but because few other city officials had enough courage to carry out such a drastic program.

During the depression days, Fort Myers offered sensational real estate bargains—for those who had money.

Lots in almost any part of town could be purchased by paying off back taxes. Houses could be bought for a fourth of what they cost to build, with the lot thrown in for good measure. Business buildings could be had for a song. Persons fortunate enough to be able to buy at that time reaped a rich harvest. For every \$1,000 invested in real estate during the depths of the depression, \$5,000 or more was returned in the early Forties.

For those who had money, the depression was no hardship. Food cost next to nothing. Here are some examples, taken from newspaper ads in April, 1933: Smoked bacon, 13c per pound; hamburger, two pounds for 19c; fresh dressed hens, 19c per pound; lamb legs, 6 pound average, 98c per leg; spare ribs, three pounds for 25c; tuna fish, 10c per can; pink salmon, three cans for 25c; fresh eggs, 15 cents a dozen; pure kettle rendered lard, 6c per pound; oleomargarine, 9c per pound; Wisconsin cream cheese, 13c per pound; evaporated milk, four tall cans, 18c; soap powder, 10 boxes for 25c; canned tomatoes, string beans or lima beans, four No. 2 cans for 25c and No. 1 Maine potatoes, ten pounds for 10c.

Early in the depression Fort Myers' unemployment problem was partly solved by the construction of the concrete bridge over the Caloosahatchee, completed in October, 1930, at a cost of \$700,000.

This new bridge was the final solution to the old, old problem of how to cross the river. Back in pioneer days settlers on the north bank had to go back and forth "to town" in their skiffs or rowboats. In 1887, after the Florida Southern had built its railroad to Punta Gorda, Captain Peter Nelson got a franchise from the state to operate a ferry across the river to connect with a hack line between Punta Gorda and Fort Myers.

Two years later Captain Nelson sold the franchise to R. A. Gillis who operated the ferry for several years and then sold it to Santa Vivas. The Vivas ferry is still remembered by many old timers. When the wind was blowing it was propelled by sails; at other times, it was "poled" across. The ferry went out of business in 1924 when the wooden bridge over the river was opened to traffic.

The new concrete bridge, named Edison Bridge in honor of Thomas A. Edison, was dedicated February 11, 1931, on the famous inventor's 84th birthday. Included among the honored guests at the dedication were Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus H. K. Curtis, James D. Newton and Harvey S. Firestone. The dedication ceremonies were arranged by a committee headed by Nat G. Walker and Ronald Halgrim, then secretary of the Chamber of Commerce. Speakers included Gov. Doyle E. Carlton, Mayor Josiah Fitch, R. W. Bentley and Roy Bishop. A plaque on the bridge was unveiled by Esten B. Fletcher, Imperial Potentate of the Shriners.

Another construction project which helped to solve the unemployment problem early in the depression was the new federal post office, completed October 30, 1933, at a cost of \$200,000.

The new post office was secured largely through the efforts of B. C. Foxworthy who had been active in Republican politics for many years. During the Hoover administration he kept bombarding Washington with requests so insistently that Congress finally approved the necessary appropriation. The post office site was purchased from the Heitman estate for \$10,000.

The site is one of the most historic spots in town. The log house which occupied the spot in pioneer days was built when Fort Myers was established in 1850 and used as headquarters for the commanding officer. Legend has it that a daughter was born there to Captain and Mrs. Winfield Scott Hancock, the first white child born in Fort Myers. In 1866 the house was occupied by Manual A. Gonzales and his family. Later the house, many times remodeled, was occupied by the families of Louis Lanier, James E. Hendry, Sr., R.I.O. Travers and finally by Harvie E. Heitman. In 1926, when the Hietman estate planned to build a million dollar hotel on the site, the house was moved back on Bay Street and used for a number of years thereafter by the library. It was demolished in 1937 after it had become unsafe and was condemned.

The new post office was opened for business on October 30, 1933. Sidney C. Ellison bought the first stamp and Miss Ella Bigelow mailed the

first letter. The postmaster then, J. E. Brecht, was succeeded on November 10, 1933, by Nat Gaillard Walker, who had been the architect on the building. The building was dedicated December 9, 1933. Speakers included J. Austin Larimer, secretary to Postmaster General James E. Farley, Postmaster Nat G. Walker, and Congressman J. Hardin Peterson. The Rev. F. A. Shore delivered the invocation.

Construction of the Edison Bridge and new post office solved the unemployment problem only partially. The number of men and women out of work and desperately in need of assistance grew constantly. Relief agencies were swamped. The first federal relief work funds, a mere dribble, came into Fort Myers in the late spring of 1933. By mid-summer, 258 unemployed men, all heads of families, were being given three days' work a week at \$1 a day. Other dribbles followed. They helped a little, but not much. The money was paid out more as a dole than to provide worthwhile employment. The so-called "relief jobs" were of the leaf-raking and ditch-cleaning variety which did the city little good and helped not a bit in bolstering the workers' morale.

By November 26, 1933, there were 589 relief workers on the county rolls. With their families these 589 men represented one third of all the residents of the county. Then came the first Civilian Works Administration (CWA) projects, approved December 13, 1933—the repairing of First Street and the construction of shuffleboard courts in Evans Park, both projects to cost \$87,288. More than 500 men reported for work. They received \$12 a week for thirty hours work. The first payroll totalled \$1,092.74—more cash money than Fort Myers merchants had seen for weeks.

CWA was followed by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and then by the Work Projects Administration (WPA). During the next six years project followed project: construction of five miles of sidewalks in East Fort Myers, repair of school buildings, reconstruction of McGregor Boulevard, repair of sewers, sewing projects, school luncheon projects, compilation of county records, and dozens of others.

A new water plant also was built with the help of federal funds as a Public Works Administration (PWA) project. The plant, with a capacity of two million gallons, was completed in 1937 at a cost of \$200,000, of which the city contributed \$95,000 and the federal government \$105,000.

Three WPA projects were outstanding and deserve special mention: the Lee County airport, the new Lee Memorial Hospital and the waterfront park and yacht basin.

The airport site was acquired by the city in 1923 for use as a municipal golf course. When the city purchased the Fort Myers Golf & Yacht Club in 1927 the tract was turned into a temporary airport with sod runways. Some of the city's early fliers used the field: C. Franklin Wheeler, Carl R. Roberts, Cliff Zeiger, Carl Dunn and the Holladay boys—Warren, Richard and Randolph.

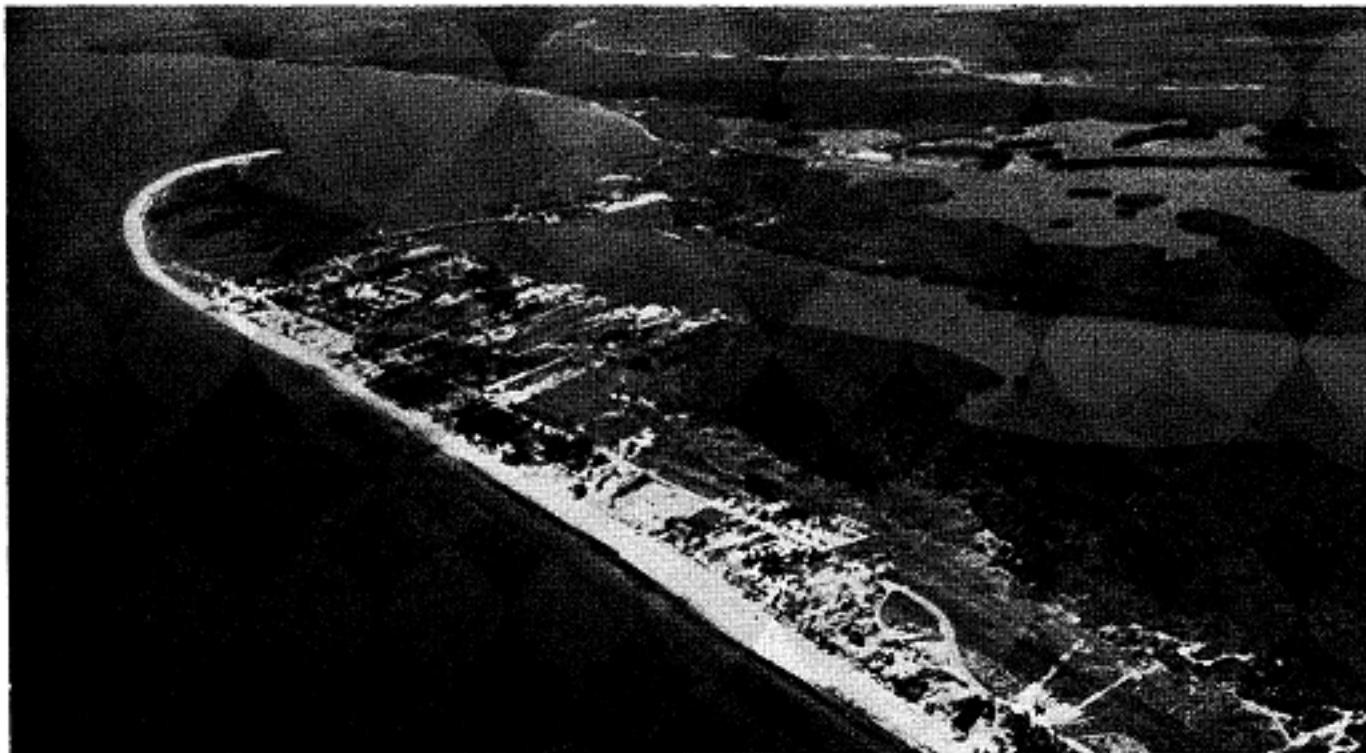
National Airlines began making stops at the airport on August 4, 1937, when the line started making daily mail and passenger flights between St. Petersburg and Miami. Later the airline was forced to cancel many flights because of wet grounds and late in the year officials threatened to discontinue service until concrete runways were provided. This could not be done because of the city's lack of money and soon afterward the planes stopped landing here. Regular service was re-established when concrete runways were constructed in 1940.

Federal aid in the improvement of the airport was made possible when the city deeded to the county in 1939 and the county obtained approval from the voters, at an election held November 7, 1939, of a \$75,000 bond issue to pay the local share of the expense. Work of constructing three concrete runways was started January 1, 1940, by WPA. Soon afterward the project was taken over by the Civil Aeronautics Authority and later by the Army. The field was greatly enlarged through the purchase of adjoining properties and extensive improvements were made. No records are available to show how much the various government agencies spent on the port; conservatives place the cost at far more than \$1,000,000.

The airport was named Page Field in honor of Channing Page, Fort Myers youth who was a World War I ace.

#### *The Waterfront Is Transformed*

In 1937 there came a WPA project which has proved to be of inestimable value to Fort Myers—Waterfront Park and the Yacht Basin.



*Photo Courtesy of Lee County Chamber of Commerce*

The beautiful beach on Estero Island and the famous resort of Fort Myers Beach are shown in this aerial photograph taken from high above the Gulf.

The waterfront at the city's front door had been an eyesore for many years. Long before the turn of the century it began to be littered up with rickety wharves, tumbledown boathouses and unsightly shacks. Trash of all kinds was dumped into the shallow water close to the river bank and low tides disclosed everything from broken whiskey bottles to worn out oxcarts. And the odor from decaying vegetation and sewage was nauseating.

A movement to improve the appearance of the waterfront by constructing seawalls and a boulevard along the river was launched in 1907 by Dr. M. O. Terry. The boulevard idea was abandoned when property owners objected to giving up riparian rights but the seawalls were started in 1908. Four years passed however, before they were completed between Monroe and Jackson. During that period Bay Street was constructed on filled land.

The seawalls served to lift the downtown section temporarily out of the mud and slime of the river's edge but as the years passed the appearance of the waterfront gradually worsened and by 1935 it was almost as bad as it had been three decades before.

Beautification of the waterfront by the creation of a park in front of the heart of town was discussed for years but objections of property owners prevented anything from being done. The deadlock was broken in 1936 by city officials, headed by Mayor David Shapard and able, progressive councilmen—R. G. Truebger, Eric W. Kinzie, W. K. Kirkpatrick, J. D. Lynn and John W. Furen. Necessary land was acquired in tax settlement deals through negotiations with administrators of the estates of Harvie E. Heitman, R. B. Leak, John M. Dean and Joseph Vivas. Plans were drawn by Frank W. Bail & Associates and the project was approved by WPA. The city's portion of the expense was \$134,629 but this included the taxes cancelled in the land deals. It is estimated that the WPA expenditure was \$300,000.

Work on the project was started January 1, 1937, and was continued off and on for nearly two years. But the job was finally finished and the waterfront was transformed. The park and yacht basin now rank at the top of the list of Fort Myers' most prized possessions.

#### *A New Hospital Is Constructed*

Fort Myers' first hospital, constructed from lumber salvaged when the original Lee County courthouse was razed in 1914, served the community for more than a quarter century before it was abandoned for a modern structure, completed as a WPA project in 1943 at a cost of \$200,000.

Two additions to the original building were made during the quarter century and it finally had sixteen rooms, with accommodations for twenty-two patients. The chief benefactor of the old hospital, who helped to keep it open during the lean years, was a retired importer of New York, Edwin A. Richard, one of the best friends Fort Myers ever had.

Others who donated to Lee Memorial Hospital, as it was officially known, included Charles A. Stadler, Mrs. Addison W. Iglehart, Cordelia Nutt, Richmond Dean, Martha H. Elms, Electra Miles Porter, Edwin M. Adams, the Rotary Club, and Margaret McLean Kidd. These donors gave either wards or rooms; numerous others made smaller donations.

Land for a new hospital was obtained through negotiations with the Lee County school board which had acquired a 39-acre tract in the Edison Park district for a civic center to consist of a high school, gymnasium, library, football stadium, baseball field and various public buildings.

Plans for the hospital were drawn by the architectural firm of Frank W. Bail & Associates and the project was approved by WPA as one of its last in Florida. Due to the fact that WPA forces were steadily shrinking as a result of improved economic conditions, only a skeleton crew of workmen was kept on the job and the hospital was not completed until the spring of 1943. It was officially opened April 18, 1943.

Members of the hospital board then were: Harry J. Wood, president; F. Irving Holmes, vice-president; Virgil Robb, treasurer, and David Ireland, Sidney Davis and William G. Clark, board members.

Contributors to the new hospital included the Methodist Golden Cross, Mrs. Helen Pratt Sheppard, Mrs. George L. Leonard, Richard DeMille Brown, Mrs. W. G. Clark, Mrs. J. H. Collins, Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Miles, Adriana Bergen Brown, George L. Leonard, Daughters of the Confederacy, Janet B. Casey, Mrs. Tom Smoot, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Prather, Mrs. Charles Morton Cist and John H. Lynch.

#### *A Cross-State Waterway Is Open*

A 371-year old dream came true in the spring of 1937—the completion of a waterway across peninsular Florida.

Way back in 1566 Pedro Menendez de Aviles, doughty founder of St. Augustine, learned that the Caloosa Indians traveled in great war canoes from the Gulf to the Atlantic. His desire to learn the route they followed was one of the reasons why he came to the West Coast in February, 1566, and later established a fort and mission, probably on Pine Island. (See Chapter I.)

Menendez' quest for the water route was unsuccessful and more than three centuries passed before the first steps were taken to make a cross-state waterway a reality. In 1881 Hamilton Disston began dredging a canal from the head of the Caloosahatchee to Lake Okeechobee as part of his reclamation project and two years later a steamer, the "Bertha Lee," managed to go from Fort Myers to Kissimmee. Forty-three days were required to make the journey. Regular steamer service between the two towns was started in 1885 but was soon abandoned because it did not pay. (See Chapter IV.)

Disston stopped his reclamation work in 1889 and no further attempt to open new waterways or drain the Glades was made until 1905 after

Napoleon B. Broward became governor of Florida. (See Chapter V.) The state then began dredging new drainage canals and the federal government deepened the channel in the Caloosahatchee.

A cross-state waterway of sorts came into existence in April, 1912, when the North New River Canal was completed from Lake Okeechobee to Fort Lauderdale. The first boat to make the east-west journey was the launch "Romona" captained by Jack Burrows who brought five sportsmen from Fort Lauderdale to Fort Myers April 18, 1912. Seven days later Governor Albert W. Gilchrist took a party of fifty newspapermen across the state to witness the official dedication of the new waterway. The party went on the "Thomas A. Edison" to LaBelle and from LaBelle to Fort Lauderdale in the "Queen of the Everglades." Capt. J. Fred Menge made his first round trip in his steamer "Suwanee" in December, 1912. He intended to make regular trips but soon learned they would not pay expenses; besides, the North New River Canal was too filled with rocks for safe navigation. And it soon became choked with hyacinths, as did the canal east of Fort Thompson. By late 1914 this cross-state waterway ceased to exist.

Two hurricanes were required to make a real cross-state waterway a reality—the hurricanes of September, 18, 1926, and September 17, 1928. Both swept water from Lake Okeechobee over surrounding land and caused terrific property damage and heavy loss of life. To prevent a recurrence of such disasters an \$18,000,000 flood control project finally was approved, the state and the federal government participating. W. P. Franklin helped mightily in pushing the project through, making many trips to Washington. Mayor Elmer Hough also played a major role.

To make the waterway, the St. Lucie Canal was dug from Lake Okeechobee east to Stuart, a new and larger canal was dug from the head of the Caloosahatchee to the lake, and the channel in the Caloosahatchee was deepened to seven feet from Fort Myers to Fort Thompson.

Opening of the waterway was celebrated March 22 and 23, 1937, when a watercade consisting of forty private yachts and government boats made the maiden trip from Stuart to Fort Myers. In the watercade, W. P. Franklin headed the Fort Myers delegation. Other leading participants in the celebration were Mayor David Shapard, J. Irving Holmes, and Carl Hanton, chairman of the celebration committee. Secretary of Commerce Daniel C. Roper, Senator Claude Pepper and Congressman J. Hardin Peterson came across the new waterway. An elaborate dinner was given for the dignitaries who made the trip by Barron G. Collier.

#### *Fort Myers During World War II*

Like the rest of the nation, Fort Myers was stunned on December 7, 1941, when radios flashed the news that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor—and that the long dreaded war finally had started. From that day until mid-summer of 1945, when Japan finally surrendered, the

people of Fort Myers subordinated everything else to the main task of aiding the nation in its hour of crisis—and praying that the lives of their loved ones in the armed services might be spared.

Before the war ended Lee County men were fighting, and dying, in all parts of the world, from the fog-shrouded rocks of the Aleutians to the jungles of New Guinea and the bloody battlefields of Italy, France and Germany. Rarely did a month pass without word being received of a Lee County youth making the supreme sacrifice.

Altogether, 64 men gave their lives. Those on the county's honor roll are: Allen Burdick, Melvin Cowart, Bill Alderman, Alton B. Moon, James P. Danley, Jimmy Randall, Sr., Jimmy Lowe, Ned Haight, Emory Watson, Pharis Weekley, Roy Gilbert, Charles Wert, Clinton Gailey, Langley Willis, Emanuel Moralis, Harry Gibbs, Edward Hammel, Charles DeFoor, Nelson Kantz, John Kurtz, Ernest E. Stewart, James W. Kaler, Howard Kinchen, Tom Derington, Bill Pagh, Oscar Futch, Louis H. Powers, Mervin Elwell, Talmadge Powell, Billy Waldrop, Hector John Whiteworth, James Handal, Jr., Joe "Smiley" Powers, O. K. Daniels, Deane Turner, Jr., Harry Hendry, Jr., Jack "Jive" Smith, James L. Clarkson, Milton Lowe, Barron Ralph Rutledge, Blaine Edward Cowart, Marvin Summerall, Elbert Acuff, Melvin Cummings, M. C. Fordham, Marvin Scalley, Andrew J. Wooten, Turner Robinson, Joe Ritch, Jesse B. Hicks, Dan Claville, Audrey T. Brannan, Jack Mellor, Ernest Magaha, John Andreu, F. W. Rigdon, Floyd Freeman, Edward T. Youmans, Benjamin M. Durance, John F. Murphy, Everett Lamb, Morgan DeFoor, Ernest Flint and Ballen Walker.



*Photo Courtesy of Lee County Chamber of Commerce*

The Civic Center of Fort Myers where the Chamber of Commerce has its offices.

Throughout the war Fort Myers was crowded with service men, due to the fact that great air bases were established by the Army at Buckingham and Page Field.

The site at Buckingham was obtained by Lieut. Col. W. A. Maxwell, commandant at Tyndall Field, Panama City, who arrived January 19, 1942, with a board of Army officers. He said the Army Air Corps needed a large tract to establish a flexible gunnery school. Conferences were held with Harry Stringfellow, chairman of the county commissioners, and Mayor Sam Fitzsimmons and within three days contracts were signed for 75,000 acres at Buckingham.

Work of constructing hangars, barracks, shops and runways was rushed and on March 29 an advance detail of 650 men of 323rd Air Base Group and 348 Materiel Group arrived with General Walter H. Franck, commander of the 3rd Air Force, in charge. To house civilian workers at the field, a 160-unit housing project was completed at a cost of \$275,000. It was named Henderson Place.

At the peak, more than 16,000 air corps men were stationed at Buckingham.

Page Field was taken over by the Army Air Corps and greatly expanded late in 1942. More land was acquired, the runways were greatly extended, and scores of buildings of all types were erected. The first men who arrived were members of the 98th Bomber Group led by Col. H. A. Halverson. The 53rd Fighter Group, flying P-39's, came next, under the command of Col. Don L. Wilhelm. At Page Field, the flyers received their final training before being assigned overseas. At the peak, approximately 4,000 men were stationed there.

Buckingham and Page fields were deactivated shortly after the war ended. Barracks at Buckingham were used for three years by an institution called Edison College which closed late in the summer of 1948. Some of the buildings at Page Field were sold to veterans for homes and others were sold for commercial purposes.

To provide a social center for the soldiers, the Army early in 1943 made arrangements with the city to erect a building at Waterfront Park. Material for its construction was obtained by tearing down the auditorium which had been built in 1927 at the head of the recreation pier at a cost of \$47,552. The auditorium, which had served the city as a community center for sixteen years, was about ready to fall down, due to the fact that it had been erected on wooden piling which had disintegrated. It had been facetiously called Fort Myers' "White Elephant."

Work on the social center was started March 14, and was completed July 18, 1943. Throughout the remainder of the war it was used as a gathering place for soldiers. Since the war it has become Fort Myers' civic center and part of it is used to house the offices of the Lee County Chamber of Commerce.

*Iona Becomes Gladiolus Center*

Southwest of Fort Myers, nestling close to the south shore of the Caloosahatchee, lies a section which during the past has become famous as the gladiolus center of the United States. More gladioli are grown there during the winter months than in any other area of comparable size anywhere in the world. The district is known as Iona.

The gladiolus industry did not locate at Iona by chance. It went there simply because Iona has been most graciously favored by Mother Nature and is widely known as the most frost-free section of continental United States, due to protection given it by the broad waters of the Caloosahatchee and the nearby Gulf.

The climatic advantages of Iona were recognized by winter growers of fresh vegetables years ago, long before the gladiolus industry came, and scores of carloads of truck produce were shipped from there every week during the winter months to northern markets.

Iona was given its name by one of the earliest settlers in that district, Donald Bain, who came there from his native home in Scotland in 1882. He built his first home close to the river about four miles northeast of Punta Rassa. A community of scattered homes grew up in that vicinity and Bain called it Iona, after the Ionian Islands off Scotland. The name stuck. Years later it was applied to the entire section close to the river southwest of Fort Myers.

During the mid-eighties pineapples were first grown commercially at Iona, Dr. J. V. Harris planting 22,000 slips in 1885. Other settlers had smaller plantations. The pineapples were large and luscious and sold at good prices. The industry looked so promising that when Fort Myers was incorporated in 1885, a pineapple in full bloom was adopted as the town insignia and used on the town seal. Pineapple raising continued until after the turn of the century when the growers found they could no longer compete with growers in Cuba and Puerto Rico who had lower production costs.

Development of Iona as a truck center was retarded for many years because of a lack of adequate transportation facilities. The nearest railroad was at Punta Gorda and truck growers on the islands could send their produce to that point quicker, easier and more cheaply than those on the mainland; consequently, the islands forged ahead and the mainland lagged behind. Iona began to come into its own after the Atlantic Coast Line built into Fort Myers but it did not catch up with Sanibel until after World War I. (See Chapter V.)

Included among the early settlers of the Iona district were Donald Bain and his brother John, Edgar Blount, Rudolph Henschen, Richard Thompson, I. L. Walker, Henry Shanahan, Delmar Swint, H. L. Able, Ed Jenny, Harry Galey, Edward Bates, C. W. Dahlem, Roy Hill, Harry Rhodes and H. L. Thornton.

A great impetus to truck growing at Iona was given by Dr. Franklin Miles, nationally famous founder of the Elkhart Laboratories at Elkhart,

Ind. Dr. Miles came to Fort Myers in 1904 and liked the climate so well that he bought several thousand acres in the Iona section. Convinced that Iona had unlimited possibilities as a section where winter vegetables could be grown commercially, Dr. Miles made thousands of experiments to determine how insects and plant diseases could best be combated and planted scores of experimental gardens, not for profit but to satisfy his scientific curiosity. He also made an intensive study of agricultural methods practiced in other parts of the world where similar climatic conditions prevailed. Information he acquired was passed on to truck growers through a school which he established. (See Index: Dr. Franklin Miles, Life of.)

Iona forged ahead rapidly during the 1920's. Great tracts of land were planted with tomatoes, cucumbers, egg plant, green beans and squash. Elmo Ballard and Leonard Sandini pioneered in growing potatoes and became markedly successful. Great truck farms also were established by Tom Bigger, Henry and Walter Pearce, Lyman Frank, J. H. Kinsey and many others.

The amount of acreage suitable for cultivation was increased tremendously by a drainage project completed during the 1920's.

To carry out the project, 2,500 property owners in the district were organized as a corporation November 8, 1916. The original officers were: J. E. Foxworthy, president; W. C. West, supervisor; A. H. Gillinghast, secretary; B. C. Foxworthy, treasurer; Cyrus Q. Stewart, attorney, and A. L. White, chief engineer. Other men associated with the project included Amos Bolick, Cyril Shawcross, J. W. Blanding, W. Stanley Hanson, G. Hunter Bryant, W. B. Graham, Duncan H. Lamons, F. A. Whitney, John K. Woolslair and Walter O. Sheppard. The largest property owners in the district were Amos Bolick, George Dunham, George R. Lynn, Cyril Shawcross, Clinton Bolick, Elmer Huff, Arthur S. Hoadley and Carl C. McClure.

After the drainage district was established, a \$600,000 bond issue was approved and work started, in 1920. Another bond issue of \$150,000 was approved later to complete the project. A total of 83 miles of drainage ditches were dug. Three dredges and a force of sixty men were used by three contractors over a six-year period. The system, when completed in 1927, was reported to be capable of carrying off an inch of rainfall in twenty-four hours.

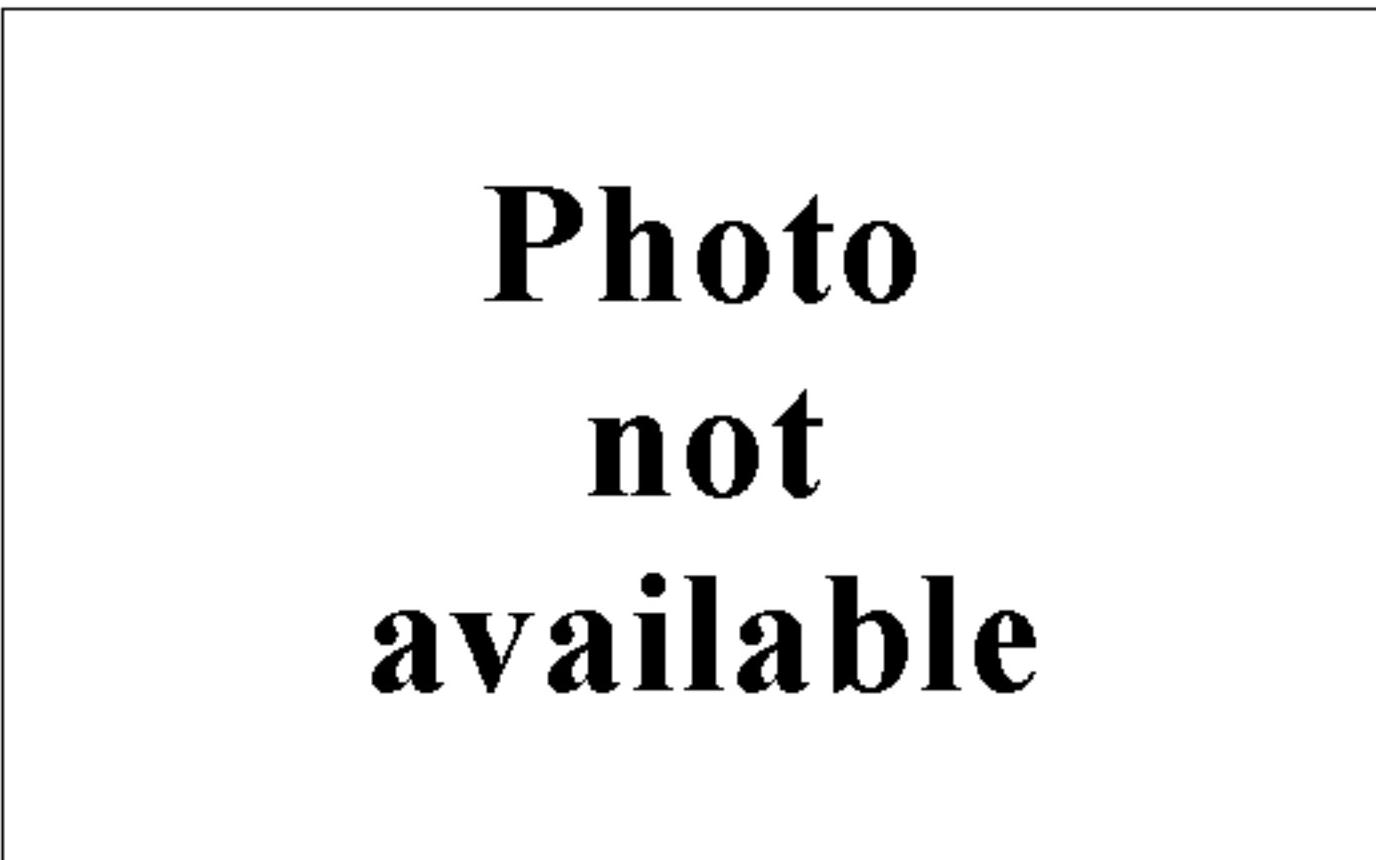
A large part of the 21,000 acres in the district was held by land speculators instead of by farmers and when the Florida crash came, the speculators could not pay the drainage taxes. The bond holders placed the district into receivership in Federal court at Tampa in 1929 and Edward C. Allen was named receiver. During the next eight years Allen succeeded in reducing the outstanding bonded debt from \$715,000 to \$455,000 and in 1938, with the cooperation of the district's board of supervisors negotiated an RFC loan to cover the \$455,000. The supervisors then were J. D. Lynn, John E. Morris and Cyril Shawcross. His work accomplished, Allen was discharged as receiver after the loan was

completed. Since then thousands more acres have been placed under cultivation and the district has flourished.

The gladiolus industry came to Iona in 1935. It was brought in by three of Florida's pioneer gladiolus firms: Rex Beach Farms, owned by the author, Rex Beach, and John O. Zipperer; Pinellas Gladiolus, Inc., owned by Shelby Shanklin and H. H. Constantine, and the A. & W. Bulb Company, owned by Donald Alvord and Fred J. Wesemeyer. Beach and Zipperer had their first farms at Sebring and the others at Clearwater.

All came about the same time—and for the same reason. They had been almost frozen out during the two preceding seasons and were seeking a district with a more favorable climate. At Iona they found exactly what they were looking for and all invested heavily in land. And during the following winter Iona became truly a flower land.

Since the winter of 1935-36 the gladiolus industry has grown steadily, with more and more acres each winter producing their gorgeous flowers. The glads are shipped by express and truck to every state east of the Rockies. The industry now brings into Lee County more money than any other. County Farm Agent Carl P. Heuck reported that during 1947-48 a total of 4,447,570 dozen were shipped worth \$2,134,833 in gross returns. And that winter was considered a "bad year," due to unusually warm weather. Approximately 30 growers cultivating from 10 to 400 acres each shared in the returns, a total of 2,500 acres being planted. The industry now represents an investment of more than \$3,000,000 and employs more than 1,000 persons during the growing season.



**Photo  
not  
available**

*Photo Courtesy of Royal Palm Studios*

Looking east on First Street from Hendry.

For enterprising hard-working growers, the gladiolus industry has been most profitable. One of the growers who has been most successful is Michael Hauk. He came to Iona in 1940 after having suffered disastrous losses at Ruskin as a result of cold weather. He had little money left but he did have a large stock of unusually fine bulbs—and a strong determination to recoup his fortune. Leasing land, he worked every hour of daylight and was rewarded with a record crop of flowers. Since then Hauk has steadily expanded his operations and now is one of the biggest gladiolus growers in the world—and one of the most successful.

Other successful glad growers besides those mentioned above include: Norman Cox, A. H. Draughon, Jr., Donald Bass, Lucian Thomas, Ralph F. Perkins, James and Joseph Povia, William P. Root, J. C. Van Lierop, William K. Sewell, Tom Biggar, Gerald B. Moody, Jeptha T. Barrett, Ferebee T. Pulley and James and Joseph Povia.

Profitable though the gladiolus industry has been, it has supplemented rather than displaced the growing of winter vegetables. Hundreds of cars of potatoes, egg plant, cucumbers and peppers are shipped each week during the winter from Lee County, almost entirely from the Iona section. Included among the leading truckers are: Tom Biggar, Harry Fitzgerald, Charles E. Marsh, Harry C. Case, John E. Kelly, William W. Tinsley, Dan Ruhl, Ben F. Counselman, Hardy C. Carter, William O. Cook, Wilson Pigott, Ernie Teston, Lucian F. Thomas, Jeptha T. Barrett, Lynman H. Frank, Ferebee T. Pulley, Haywood Montgomery, Bryant E. Pearce, Donald Bass, John L. Kelly, Herb Thomas, John Henschen, Geraci Growers and Packers and Michael Hauk.

Otis Brannen, P. & M. A. administrator in Lee County, estimates that 1100 acres were planted in 1948-49 in potatoes, 3,000 acres in other vegetables and 2200 acres in gladioli.

Lee County's stellar industry of yesteryear, cattle raising, has been topped by the gladiolus and trucking industries but it still brings hundreds of thousands of dollars into the county annually. However, the skinny, raw-boned scrub cow of a half century ago has practically disappeared. She has been replaced by larger, better animals, raised by progressive cattlemen who have adopted scientific methods and spent fortunes to improve the stock, fence their lands, dip their cattle to guard against parasites, and plant nourishing grasses.

Leading cattlemen of Lee County today include David W. Ireland, Robert A. Henderson, Jr., Seth Daniels, Russell E. Rich, Gerald Moody, Guy M. Strayhorn, Ken Williams, Harney Stipe, Bryant and Walter Pearce, Mark Bateman, Thad Williams, Carl Williams, Dave Flint, Bud Hunter, C. L. Starnes, Louis Baucon, C. J. Jones, Ewing Starnes, Raleigh Flint and Barney Williams.

The Lee County Cattlemen's Association, organized September 20, 1947, had 81 members in the fall of 1948. The first officers were: Russell E. Rich, president; Seth Daniels, vice-president; David W. Ireland, treasurer, and C. P. Heuch, secretary. Directors were George W. Whitehurst, Sr., Gerald B. Moody and R. A. Henderson, Jr.

*Making Up for Lost Time*

During the lean depression years, the population of Fort Myers remained almost stationary, increasing only from 9,082 in 1930 to 10,604 in 1940. But thereafter Fort Myers began really to spurt ahead and by 1945 the city boasted of a population of 15,198, as shown by the state census. And when travel restrictions were removed after war's end the growth continued even faster than before.

Boom-time subdivisions in which the paved streets had become overgrown with grass came to life again. Hundreds of new homes were built in all parts of the city—in the old settled sections and far out in the suburbs. Many new business buildings were erected including an \$85,000 exchange building for the Inter-County Telephone & Telegraph Company, built to house a new automatic dial system to cost more than \$250,000.

To provide better facilities for school children, a proposed \$1,000,-000 bond issue was put up to the voters on May 25, 1946, and was approved by an almost three-to-one vote, 1,469 to 507. Lunch rooms were provided at a number of schools, a new school was erected at Fort Myers Beach, and a \$65,000 stadium was constructed. Late in 1948 plans were nearing completion for a new high school building. During the decade preceding 1948 the number of pupils in Lee County schools increased from 3,224 to 4,325.

The growth of Fort Myers was shown by the increase in the number of building permits issued. During the war years the building industry was practically dormant, as it was elsewhere throughout the country, but when restrictions were removed at war's end the industry spurted ahead. In 1945 the building permits totalled \$394,560, in 1946 they leaped to \$806,633 and in 1947 to \$1,429,705, the best year Fort Myers had had since boom days. Building activities continued steadily throughout 1948.

A famous landmark, the Royal Palm Hotel, became only a memory in 1948. Erected in 1897 by Hugh O'Neill, the hotel had been a leading factor in the metamorphosis of Fort Myers from a frontier "cow town" to one of the leading winter resorts of the nation. Scores of celebrities and millionaires had stopped in the rambling wooden structure, with its beautiful surrounding gardens, and many remained to build winter homes and make investments in groves and business properties.

As the years went by, however, the Royal Palm became outmoded and more than a little decrepit and part of it was finally condemned and closed. It was reopened during the war to house soldiers but when the war ended it was closed again, its days of usefulness being ended. On October 13, 1947, the property was purchased from the Dr. M. O. Terry estate for \$105,000 by T. H. "Tom" Phillips who shortly afterward began razing the main building to clear the ground so it could be sold for business sites. The demolition work was completed in November, 1948,

and the remaining rubble was set afire, and the last of the Royal Palm went up in smoke.

The loss of the Royal Palm was more than made up, however, by the preservation of another famous landmark, Seminole Lodge, the winter home of Thomas A. Edison, who died October 12, 1931. The lodge and the laboratory on the opposite side of McGregor boulevard were deeded to the city on February 18, 1947, by Mrs. Edison as a shrine to the famous inventor. The estate was opened to the public on the following November 1 and during the following year it was visited by more than 35,000 persons. The property was managed by Fred Lowdermilk. Less than seven months after the priceless gift was made to the city Mrs. Edison died, on August 25, 1947, in New York City, and Fort Myers mourned over the passing of an old and dear friend. She was survived by three children: Madeleine Edison Sloane, Charles Edison, former Secretary of the Navy and former governor of New Jersey, and Theodore Miller Edison, a noted inventor like his father.

Late in 1948 work was started on resurrecting a once famous road which had ceased to exist decades ago—the road to Immokalee. In the days of ox teams and cattle drives this road, which led into Anderson Avenue, was one of the principal roads of the county and was one of the first to be graded and covered with a few inches of shell. It was abandoned, however, after a hard-surfaced road was constructed between Fort Myers and Buckingham and nothing was done to bring it back into use until November 9, 1948, when work of reconstructing it was started by the Brinson Construction Company, of Tampa. The project, which was to cost \$359,302, was financed out of the county's surplus gasoline tax funds.

By early winter of 1948 Fort Myers boosters insisted that the city's population had passed the 20,000 mark—many said it exceeded 25,000. No one knew for sure. But everyone was positive of one fact—Fort Myers was truly making up for lost time.



## CHAPTER IX

### MISCELLANEOUS

#### FORT MYERS

THE ORIGINAL TOWN SITE of Fort Myers, consisting of 139.45 acres, was platted by Major James Evans, of Nonsemond County, Virginia, in the early fall of 1876 shortly after he acquired title to the fort site from the federal government. The actual survey was made by Julian Arista, deputy surveyor of Monroe County, in which Fort Myers was then located. The plat was recorded in Key West in December, 1876.

Much of the land in the original town was deeded by Evans to pioneers who had settled there and the streets were laid out to conform with the property they were occupying. This explains the irregularity of the street plan, something which has caused surveyors trouble ever since.

Not more than ten families lived in Fort Myers at the time the town plat was recorded—Fort Myers was a frontier cow town in every meaning of the term.

The number of inhabitants slowly increased and by the mid-Eighties approximately fifty families were living within the town limits which by then had been expanded to take in a subdivision opened by Major Evans. The need for public improvements and better law enforcement led the residents to incorporate the settlement as a town. This was done at a meeting of forty-five electors August 12, 1885. Town officials were chosen at the same meeting. (See Chapter III.)

Mayors of the town of Fort Myers were elected as follows: Howell A. Parker, 1885; Peter O. Knight, 1886; W. W. Foos, 1887; Howell A. Parker, 1888; W. H. Simmons, 1889; Howell A. Parker, 1890; L. G. Thorp, 1891; J. L. Harn, 1892; L. A. Hendry, 1893; G. W. Kinnison, 1894; R. B. Leak, 1895; Menendez Johnson, 1896; J. L. Harn, 1897; L. A. Hendry, 1898; E. L. Evans, 1899, served part term and was succeeded by Robert Lilly; J. C. Jeffcott, 1900-01; Louis A. Hendry, 1902, 03, 04; W. D. Bell, 1905; Henry A. Hendry, 1906, 07, 08; Robert Lilly, 1909, and Louis A. Hendry, 1910.

Councilmen were elected as follows by the Town of Fort Myers:

F. A. Hendry, 1885; N. L. Langford, 1885, 89, 91, 92, 95; J. T. Haskew, 1885, 86, 87; W. M. Hendry, 1885, 87; J. J. Blount, 1885, 99, 1901; W. A. Roberts, 1885; J. O. Braman, 1885, 87; James Evans, 1886, 87, 91, 92, 93; W. P. Gardner, 1887; Manuel Gonzalez, 1887, 90, 94, 97; Taylor Frierson, 1887; Ed. L. Evans, 1888; R. A. Henderson, Sr., from 1888 through 1911; Joseph Vivas, 1888; James E. Hendry, Sr., 1888; Robert Cranford, 1889; W. R. Boyd, 1889; W. F. Powell, 1889, 90, 94, 96, 98; James W. Bain, 1889, 91; L. G. Thorp, 1889; C. W. Hendry 1890; L. A. Hendry, 1890; Menendez Johnson, 1890, 95, 08; L. M. Stroup, 1891, 92, 05, 07, 09; William H. Towles, 1892, 03, 04, 05, 07, 09; A. A. Maywald, 1892, 93, 97, 06; T. O. Langford, 1892; D. C. Kantz, 1893, 95; E. J. Blount, 1893; L. C. Stewart, 1894; J. F. Loughran, 1894; T. M. Park, 1895, 97, 99; H. E. Heitman, 1896 through 1911; Will P. Henley, 1896; Henry L. Roan, 1896, 98; C. A. MacDougald, 1897 through 1906; G. W. Lightsey, 1899 through 1905; E. M. Williams, 1899; Philip Isaacs, 1900, 02, 03; George F. Ireland, 1900 through 1906; J. L. Young, 1900, 01; A. Sloan, 1903, 04; R. I. O. Travers, 1905, 07; W. F. Mickle, 1905; E. Stulpner, 1905, 06; Frank Carson, 1908, 10; Andrew Kinzie, 1909; R. W. Gilliam, 1910.

Fort Myers was incorporated as a city by the State Legislature in April, 1911. Succeeding mayors were:

Louis A. Hendry, 1911; C. W. Carlton, 1912; R. C. Matson, 1913; Louis A. Hendry, 1914; D. W. Sumner, 1915; L. G. Pope, 1916; W. P. Franklin, 1917, 18; C. L. Starnes, 1919, and C. Q. Stewart, 1920.

Councilmen during this period were elected as follows: R. A. Henderson, 1911; W. H. Towles, 1911, 13; H. E. Heitman, 1911 through 1918; L. M. Stroup, 1911; A. L. Kinzie, 1911 through 1917; William Jeffcott, 1912, 18; Dr. W. B. Winkler, 1912, 15; W. Stanley Hanson, 1912, 14; Dr. J. B. Porter, 1913, 15; W. C. Bigelow, 1914; C. J. Stubbs, 1915; Ewald Stulpner, 1914; Vernon G. Widerquist, 1916; T. H. Fulford, 1915; F. E. Trapp, 1916; T. H. Colcord, 1916, 18; J. J. Barden, 1917, 19;

G. B. Reynolds, 1918; Virgil C. Robb, 1919; A. T. Smith, 1919; E. H. Sykes, 1919; L. F. Goodale, 1920; T. H. Phillips, Jr., 1920, and A. E. Raymond, 1920.

A commission-manager form of government, made possible by a new charter authorized by the State Legislature in March, 1921, was approved by the voters 225 to 54 on April 4, 1921. The five commissioners elected on June 28, and at following elections, chose one of their number each year to serve as mayor. They were: Virgil Robb, 1921; C. C. Pursley, 1922; Vernon G. Widerquist, 1923; A. E. Raymond, 1924; O. M. Davison, 1925; Frank Kellow, 1926; H. E. Parnell, 1927, also Clinton Bolick, 1927, and Elmer Hough, 1928.

Commissioners elected during this period served as follows: Vernon G. Widerquist, 1921 until May, 1924; Virgil C. Robb, 1921 until May, 1924; C. C. Pursley, 1921 until May, 1924; B. E. Tinstman, 1921 until June, 1923; E. H. Sykes, 1921; A. E. Raymond, 1922 until August, 1927; R. B. Gilbert, June 23, 1923 until July 17, 1923; O. M. Davison, July 17, 1923, until April 6, 1926; L. F. Goodale, May, 1924, until December, 1925; Frank Kellow, May, 1924, until April, 1928; H. E. Parnell, May, 1924, until November, 1927; L. A. Wingate, December, 1925, until April, 1928; A. B. Cutter, April, 1926, until end; R. L. Newman, August 1927, until November, 1927; Clinton Bolick, November, 1927, until end; Elmer Hough, November, 1927, until end; C. L. Starnes, April, 1928, until end, and C. W. Bartleson, April, 1928, until end.

**CITY MANAGERS:** J. G. Bennett was named as the first city manager and served from August 1, 1921, until December 1, 1921. He was succeeded by C. P. Staley who served continuously from December 1, 1921, until September 8, 1928, except for period during 1925 when A. B. Cutter held the office. Staley was succeeded in 1928 by Lester H. Baker as acting city manager.

Fort Myers returned to the councilmanic form of government in 1929, the first election being held July 18.

Mayors since then have been elected as follows:

William J. Wood, 1929; Josiah H. Fitch, 1930, 32; Frank A. Whitney, 1933; David Shapard, 1935, 37, 39; Sam Fitzsimmons, 1941, 43; David Shapard, 1945; R. E. Kurtz, 1947, and Ernest (P. D.) Goodyear, 1948.

From 1929 through 1933 councilmen were elected at large, as follows: 1929: Holland McCormick, Virgil Robb, F. E. Forehand, and Martin E. Shultz; 1930: W.

H. Ross and F. E. Forehand; 1931: Holland McCormick, Dan P. Morrison, and Martin E. Shultz; 1932: R. G. Truebger and J. D. Lynn; 1933: Dan P. Morrison and John W. Furen.

The 1933 election was held in March. During the following month the State Legislature amended the city charter to require councilmen to be elected by wards, necessitating another election, held July 5. Councilmen have served the various wards since then as follows:

Ward No. 1: G. A. Lundquist, 1933; R. G. Truebger, 1935, 37; E. E. Edenfield, 1939, 41, 43, 45; R. J. Seagraves, 1947, 48. Ward No. 2: Eric W. Kinzie, 1933, 35, 37, 39; Scott Hough, 1941, 43, 45; L. H. Blouch, 1947; Earl Bobbitt, 1948. Ward No. 3: David Shapard, 1933; W. K. Kirkpatrick, 1935; B. B. Daniels, 1937, 39; Luke Towles, 1941; James C. Spooner, 1943; Thomas J. Fink, 1945; Fred Skinner, 1947, 48. Ward No. 4: J. D. Lynn, 1933, 35, 37, 39; Lee O. Daniel, 1941, 43; W. H. Reynolds, 1945; J. L. (Johnny) Shay, 1947, and John W. Shultz, 1948. Ward No. 5: John W. Furen, 1933, 35, 37, 39; H. C. Case, 1941, 43; Harry M. McWhorter, 1945; J. H. (Jack) Shearer, 1947, and Elmo Ballard, 1948.

Other elected town and city officials include the following:

Town clerk and treasurer: C. H. Stebbins, 1885 through 1888; T. Levens, 1889 until death in July, 1907, succeeded by H. A. Blake who served through 1908; Nathan G. Stout, 1909, 10. City clerk: Nathan G. Stout, 1911; W. L. Long, 1912, and D. W. Sumner, 1913. City clerk and collector: J. W. Owens, 1914 through 1920. City clerk, collector and treasurer: Nell Barden, 1929 through 1933; James B. Roberts, 1935 through 1940; Viola Johnson from January 1, 1941 until Charles Chandler was elected to office in 1941. Chandler held the office, which later became appointive, until November, 1948, when he was succeeded by Mrs. Sara Nell Williams.

Marshal and collector: C. L. Oliver, 1885, 86; T. W. Langford, 1887, 89; L. M. Stroup, 1889, 91; B. E. Henderson, 1891 until 1896; Hiram K. Stevens, 1896; Frank Carson, 1897, 98; T. T. Henderson, 1899; Charles Hadley, 1900, 01; L. M. Stroup, 1902, 03; S. W. Sanchez, 1904 through 1911. City Marshal: Y. E. Yelvington, 1912—thereafter office was appointive.

City treasurer: Nathan G. Stout, 1911; J. B. Parker, 1912; R. H. Meeks, 1913 through 1919; Clyde Gonzalez, 1920.

City collector: W. Stanley Hanson, 1911; H. K. Stevens, 1912, 13, and D. T. Farabee, 1914.

Chief of police, elected: W. D. Smith, 1935, 37; C. S. Moore, 39, 41, 43, thereafter appointed.

Tax assessor: C. J. Raby, 1929 through 43, thereafter appointed.

## POPULATION

The federal census of 1890, made five years after Fort Myers was incorporated as a town, showed that the infant town had a population of 575. Census figures, federal and state, since then have been: 1895—751; 1900—943; 1910—2,463; 1915—3,244; 1920—3,678; 1925—6,674; 1930—9,082; 1935—10,312; 1940—10,604, and 1945—15,198.

The population of Lee County, created in 1887, was 1,414 when the federal census was taken in 1890. By 1900 the population had increased to 3,071, by 1910 to 6,294 and by 1920 to 9,540. In 1923 Hendry and Collier counties were created out of Lee but despite this loss, the population of what was left of Lee County jumped to 14,990 by 1930 and to 17,488 by 1940.

## LEE COUNTY

Lee County was created by act of the State Legislature in May, 1887. (See Chapter III.) It was carved out of Monroe, the county seat of which was Key West. The first election was held May 17, 1887.

The new county was one of the largest in the State and comprised practically all of southwest Florida.

Old Lee County was split up by the State Legislature in 1923, portions of it being taken to create Collier and Hendry counties. Collier County was named after Barron G. Collier, who owned practically all of it, and Hendry County after Capt. F. A. Hendry, pioneer of Fort Myers and one of the leading citizens of South Florida for many years.

Elected officials of Lee County include the following:

Clerk of circuit court: J. W. Bain, 1887 through 1891; L. G. Thorp, 1892 through 1896; W. H. Hendry, 1897 through 1912; H. A. Hendry 1913 through 1916; J. F. Garner, 1917 until his death in 1932, succeeded for remainder of term by C. W. Carlton; W. L. Draughon, 1933 until his death in 1936, succeeded by his widow, Esther Draughon who served through 1940; D. T. Farabee, 1941 to present, re-elected in 1948.

Tax collector: N. L. Langford, 1887 through 1898; I. S. Singletary, 1899

through 1904; R. I. O. Travers, 1905 and 1906; C. O. Swanson, 1907-08; E. J. Blount, 1909-10; R. A. Blake, 1911 through 1916; P. John Hart, 1917 through 1924; R. V. Lee, 1925 through 1940, and James B. Roberts, 1941 to present, re-elected in 1948.

Tax assessor: I. S. Singletary, 1887-88; J. M. Henderson, 1889-90; M. S. Gonzalez, 1891-92; James Evans, 1893 through 1900; P. John Hart, 1901 through 1910; G. Hunter Bryant, 1911 through 1920, and John M. Boring, 1921 to present, re-elected in 1948.

County treasurer: James E. Hendry, 1887 through 1892; R. A. Henderson, Sr., 1893 through 1913 when office was eliminated, being consolidated with that of county tax collector.

Sheriff: T. W. Langford, 1887 through 1900; Frank B. Tippins, 1901 until February, 1925; Ed A. Albritton, February, 1925, through 1926; Frank B. Tippins, 1927 through 1932; Robert R. King, 1933 through 1940; Fred S. Roberts, 1941 through 1944; Floyd Ellis, 1945 through 1948; Flanders G. Thompson, elected in 1948.

County Judge: Robert Cranford, 1887-88; L. S. Wood, 1889; William E. Loper, 1889-90; H. A. Parker, 1891-92; George W. Hendry, 1893-94; Charles H. Braman, 1895-96; George W. Powell, 1897-04; Philip Isaacs, 1905-06; A. B. Beall, 1907-12; William L. Long, January to November, 1913; D. W. Sumner, November, 1913 through 1916; H. L. Williamson, 1917-18; Nathan G. Stout, November, 1918 through 1928; L. Y. Redwine, 1929-32; David Elmer Ward, 1933-38; Charles Wilson Ward, 1939-44; Hiram W. Bryant, 1945, re-elected 1948.

Superintendent of schools: D. C. Kantz, 1887-96; W. W. Bostick, 1897-00; Joseph F. Shands, 1901 until death in June, 1907; D. W. Sumner, June, 1907 through 1912; Joseph W. Sherrill, 1913 to August 13, 1920; J. D. McFerron, August 13, 1920, to October, 1924; J. Colin English, October, 1924, through 1932; Harry F. Hendry, 1933 through 1944; Ellis Park Green, 1944 until July 31, 1948, when he was succeeded by Charles Bevis, superintendent-elect.

Supervisor of registrations: W. R. Washburn, 8-4-1890 to 7-6-1896; L. C. Stewart, 7-6-1896 to 7-2-1900; Henry B. Hoyer, 7-2-1900 to 1-6-1913; Robert Lilly, 1-6-1913 to 3-1-1915; Grover E. Gerald, 3-1-1915 to 12-5-1928; Mrs Grover E. Gerald, 12-5-1928 to 2-8-1932; Mrs. Clyde Gonzalez, 2-8-1932 to 12-9-1936, and Mrs. R. Tuttle Smith, 12-9-1936 to present, re-elected in 1948.

## PUBLIC UTILITIES

The development of public utilities in Fort Myers has been discussed at considerable detail in the general text. The following summaries are given to serve for reference.

### Light, Power and Ice

A five-year franchise to supply electricity to Fort Myers was awarded by the town council October 9, 1897, to the Seminole Canning Company, headed by A. A. Gardner. The town agreed to pay \$300 a year for ten 32-candlepower incandescent street lights. Service was started January 1, 1898. In the beginning, the Royal Palm Hotel used 98 lights and all the rest of the town 103, making a total of 201. The town people paid 35 cents for each 16-candlepower light a week.

The revenue of the light company was less than \$70 a week by the end of January, 1898, but Gardner was so encouraged by the way residents were ordering service connections that he contracted for another 50-horsepower boiler and 640-light dynamo. They were installed in May, 1898. Gustav Widerquist was the chief engineer of the power plant.

Ice manufacturing equipment was installed by the light company in the spring of 1901 and the first ice was sold May 22. Delivered, it cost a cent a pound; at the factory it was sold for fifty cents a hundred pounds. The capacity of the ice plant was doubled during 1903, the new machinery being installed by Harry A. Laycock.

The Seminole Power & Ice Company, as the concern was officially called, was sold by Gardner on February 28, 1913, to the Engineering & Securities of New York, the announced sale price being \$104,000. Later, the name of the company was changed to Southern Utilities.

The power and ice plants were purchased during 1925 from Southern Utilities by the Florida Power & Light Company which soon afterward constructed an addition costing \$100,000. In 1940 the ice plant was leased to the City Ice & Fuel Company.

During the past twenty years the Florida Power & Light Company has constantly improved its plant and transmission facilities. Since 1940 it has added 105 miles of new distribution lines and the number of customers and the amount of power consumed has more than doubled.

### Telephones

A fourteen-year franchise to provide telephone service in Lee County was awarded by the county commissioners

January 2, 1900, to Gilmer M. Heitman who founded the Lee County Telephone Company. The franchise later was limited to nine years. Heitman purchased a 50-drop switchboard, wet batteries and other equipment and opened an exchange in the new brick building erected by his brother, Harvie E. Heitman. The system was put into operation February 21, 1900.

The lines were extended to Buckingham late in 1900, to Naples on February 1, 1901, and to LaBelle on September 2, 1902. Also in September, 1902, a hook-up was made with the Arcadia Telephone Company which had a line from Arcadia to Punta Gorda. Sunday service was provided for Fort Myers subscribers for the first time on January 8, 1903.

Connections were made with Tampa on February 4, 1904, and to Marco March 30, 1905. All night service was started November 15, 1905—before that the lines went dead at 10 p. m. and did not become alive again until 6 a. m.

On May 11, 1906, the town council of Fort Myers granted a ten-year franchise to James C. Hickey, of Rialta, who formed the Fort Myers Telephone Company and installed a competing system. This competitor was bought out by the Lee County Telephone Company on August 1, 1907.

On February 4, 1924, the city council granted the company a 25-year franchise and President Heitman put up a \$10,000 bond guaranteeing that the system would be enlarged and modernized. At that time Fred Philips sought a franchise for a competing system but it was not granted.

The Lee County Telephone Company and four other telephone companies in south Florida were purchased on April 23, 1924 by Barron G. Collier who founded the Inter-County Telephone & Telegraph Company with its general offices in Fort Myers. The new company provided service throughout Lee, Collier, DeSoto, Hendry, Highlands, Charlotte, Glades, Okeechobee and Hardee counties and partial service in Polk, St. Lucie and Palm Beach counties.

On July 1, 1941, the company was purchased from the Collier estate by George W. Thompson and E. E. Patterson, of Chicago. During the summer of 1948 a new \$85,000 central exchange was started in Fort Myers for the installation of an automatic dial system to cost approximately \$250,000.

### Water

Repeated attempts to secure a municipally owned waterworks were made by the progressive element of Fort Myers after the town was incorporated in 1885

but all were blocked by the anti-high-taxes group until 1910. On July 8 of that year the voters approved 58 to 15 a \$15,000 bond issue to provide a water system and also \$35,000 for a sewerage system and \$10,000 for a new school.

The first water plant was erected by the town at "Sandspur Patch," at Lee and Peck streets. A Fairbanks-Morse pump was installed and a 50,000 gallon tank erected. Three artesian wells were drilled close to the plant to supply the needed water. Another artesian well later was drilled near the present City Hall.

The system of water mains was greatly extended and many improvements made to the water plant during the Boom days. However, the rapid growth of the city after 1935 made a new plant necessary and in 1937 one was constructed as a PWA project at Evans and Anderson at a cost of \$200,000, the city paying \$95,000 and the federal government \$105,000. Included in the project were a 200,000 gallon tank and a 240,000 gallon reservoir. At the same time thirteen shallow wells were dug three blocks south of the plant. These wells and eight more dug later were ruined in 1946 and 1947 by contamination from the Florida Pine Products Company. Sixteen other shallow wells were then dug three miles east of the plant. In December, 1946, a million-gallon reservoir was completed,

providing a total storage capacity of 1,440,000 gallons.

The first superintendent of the water-works was S. M. "Fatty" Smith who was succeeded by Theodore Lauth who served until 1937. Lauth was followed by W. B. Gibson who served until October 1, 1945, when he was succeeded by Lamar Bomar, the present superintendent.

### Gas

A municipally owned gas plant was authorized in 1924 by the city commission which awarded a contract for its construction to the American Gas & Construction Company, of Newton, Ia., at a cost of \$130,000. Gas was turned on for the first time on December 26, 1924.

To begin with only seventy-five Fort Myers homes were supplied but this number increased to 825 during the boom period. After the crash the number of connections remained almost the same until after the mid-Thirties when the city council employed Carlton Vandervort to take charge of sales. A downtown office was opened and Vandervort performed an outstanding sales job, selling hundreds of gas appliances to people who had not had gas in their homes before. However, merchants and bottled gas peddlers objected, saying the city's competition was "unfair." As



*Photo Courtesy of Lee County Chamber of Commerce*

Looking northeastward across downtown Fort Myers—Edison Bridge in background.

a result, a council group finally succeeded in getting Vandervort fired—for being too efficient.

In November, 1948, the gas plant was supplying gas for 1900 homes in Fort Myers. Its production capacity had been increased from an original 23,000 cubic feet per hour to 45,000 through the addition of propane boosters and the storage capacity from 100,000 cubic feet to 360,000.

When the plant was opened in 1924, W. C. Brown was brought to Fort Myers from Decorah, Ia., to take charge and has served as superintendent ever since.

### FIRE DEPARTMENT

After Fort Myers was almost wiped out by fires shortly after the turn of the century a volunteer fire department was organized on May 13, 1901, with Guy B. Reynolds as president, Frank C. Alderman, vice-president; Philip Isaacs, secretary-treasurer; Carl F. Roberts, captain, and C. F. Cates, first assistant. Almost all able-bodied men in town agreed to serve as volunteers. A fund was raised to buy a hand-operated pump and other equipment.

Reynolds served as the first chief of the organization but was soon succeeded by Cates who directed the fire fighters during the disastrous fire of October 16, 1903, which almost destroyed the downtown business section. Cates was followed early in 1905 by Harry A. Laycock who succeeded in persuading the town council to buy a Watrous gasoline fire engine and 1,000 feet of hose for \$2,200.

The Watrous engine had just one cylinder and had to be heated with a Bunsen burner before it could be started. It was mounted on a little cart which had to be pulled or pushed through the sandy streets when an alarm was sounded. Sometimes a team of horses could be commandeered to do the pulling but more often it was dragged along by the volunteers themselves. Water was obtained from artesian wells, from cisterns or from the river. Whenever a fire occurred the alarm was sounded by ringing an iron bell hung on the roof of the Phoenix Hall, at First and Hendry.

The Watrous served the town for ten years and was replaced only after another disastrous series of fires. The city council then listened to the pleas of Chief Laycock and ordered a \$10,000 American LaFrance engine-truck which arrived April 7, 1915, and shortly afterward was housed in a new fire station at Lee and Anderson.

The new truck was not equipped with a self starter and the only man who could

spin the stubborn motor was Volunteer O. L. "Johnny" Johns. So it was dubbed the Johnny Johns and was called by that name thereafter. The first driver of the truck was old-timer L. C. "Lew" Stewart who had driven an automobile only a few times before. On the first trip out, to answer an alarm from the home of Jehu Blount, Stewart rounded an intersection at Hough and Second at high speed, capsized the truck and threw volunteers in all directions. The only casualty was a broken front wheel.

Laycock served as chief of the fire department, always as an unpaid volunteer, until 1916 when he was succeeded by Corley Bryant who served until 1927. He was followed by William R. Anderson, the present chief, who has served continuously since 1927 except for four years during World War II while he was in the Navy. During that period R. S. Bass, present assistant chief, headed the department.

"Johnny John" was used by the department until 1943 when it was finally sold. Another American LaFrance was purchased in 1922 and during the boom an aerial truck and two pumper trucks were purchased. A small booster truck was purchased in 1944 and since then two more boosters have been acquired. The department also has a modern first-aid truck equipped with an iron lung, three resuscitators, grappling irons, stretcher and all types of first-aid equipment.

Since the boom days the department has been operated by paid firemen and volunteers. In November, 1948, Anderson was chief, Bass, first assistant chief, and Roswell King, second assistant chief. The other paid firemen were: Charles R. Smith, Joseph W. Carter, Jr., Joseph Brecht, Grover C. Lindenmuth, Norman Hutchison, James E. Bittick and Roderick W. Anderson.

The volunteers serving were Tony Alvarez, Bryant Baker, Mure Carter, Ed Ferger, Olin Gay, Albert Gayle, Roscoe Herrington, Ernest Hollis, Vern Jungferman, Larry Ligon, George Lynch, William McWhorter, Morgan G. Reid, Howard B. Rogers, Ray Smith and Carlton Thompson.

### BANKS OF FORT MYERS

Striking proof of Fort Myers' rapid recovery from the depression is furnished by the great increase in deposits in the city's two banks, the Lee County Bank and the First National Bank in Fort Myers. The first is an outgrowth of the old Lee County Bank, Title & Trust Company and the second of the old First National Bank of Fort Myers.

These two institutions were opened for business during 1934 and on their first published statements June 30, 1934, had deposits totaling little more than \$600,000. Fourteen years later, on June 30, 1948, their deposits totalled \$13,391,140.74.

### Lee County Bank

The Lee County Bank was organized January 2, 1934. Its first officers were: F. Irving Holmes, president; J. H. Fears, vice-president and cashier; R. C. Tooke, assistant cashier, and J. H. Thomas, assistant cashier. Mr. Holmes served as president until his death on July 9, 1947. Soon thereafter Mr. Fears was made president.

Deposits in the bank on December 30, 1935, totalled \$697,243.97; on December 30, 1940, \$1,288,800.42; on December 30, 1945, \$6,627,039.81 and on June 30, 1948, \$6,895,064.54.

Officers in the bank in November, 1948, were: Mr. Fears, president; Brown Austin, vice-president and cashier; Mr. Tooke, assistant cashier; Mr. Thomas, assistant cashier, and J. A. Ansley, assistant cashier. Directors of the bank were: Sidney Davis, Mr. Fears, Gilmer M. Heitman, Jr., R. A. Henderson, Jr., Mr. Austin, George E. Judd and A. L. Kinzie.

### First National Bank

The First National Bank in Fort Myers opened for business June 15, 1934. Directors then were Frank C. Alderman, Sr., George Kingston, Charles F. Miles, George Sims and Miss Josephine M. Stadler. The officers were Mr. Alderman, president; Mr. Kingston, vice-president; Harry Fagan, cashier, and William F. Gordon, assistant cashier. They served until February 21, 1946, when Mr. Kingston died. Soon afterward his son, Ralph G. Kingston, was elected vice-president. Mr. Alderman died on June 10, 1946, and immediately thereafter Ralph Kingston was elected president, Frank C. Alderman, Jr., first vice-president, and Mr. Fagan vice-president and cashier.

Officers of the bank in November, 1948, were: Mr. Kingston, president; Mr. Alderman, vice-president; Mr. Fagan, vice-president and cashier; D. W. Lambe, assistant cashier, and C. W. Starnes, assistant cashier. Directors were: C. P. Adams, Mr. Alderman, Mr. Kingston, Marguerite M. Nichols, Sam W. Johnston, Walter S. Turner, Jr., and Mr. Fagan.

When the bank started it had a paid-in capital and surplus of \$125,000. On June 30, 1948, its capital, surplus and undivided profits exceeded \$350,000. Its de-

posits on June 30, 1934, were \$358,974.43; on June 30, 1948, they totalled \$6,496,076.20, an increase of 1709 per cent in fourteen years or an increase of 122 per cent each year the bank has been in business.

### PUBLICATIONS

The Fort Myers Press, the first newspaper on the West Coast south of Tampa, was founded November 22, 1884, by Stafford C. Cleveland, of Penn Yan, N. Y. (See Chapter IV.)

Following Editor Cleveland's death in December, 1885, the paper was purchased by Frank H. Stout. He had no competition in the newspaper field until late in 1894 when a political faction he had offended financed the establishment of the Tropical News, edited by Philip Isaacs. Stout's revenues dwindled rapidly and on August 1, 1895, he sold to Charles W. Hill, of Jerauld County, South Dakota. But Hill was unable to meet his payments and Stout took the paper back three months later.

On March 26, 1896, Stout sold the Press again, this time to J. D. Rose and Hal Selby, retaining an interest himself. Late the same year the Press was consolidated with the Tropical News in a deal engineered by the county commissioners for "the best interests of the people and the taxpayers." The Fort Myers Publishing Company was formed by Rose, Selby and Isaacs. Rose sold his interest to Nathan G. Stout, son of Frank Stout, on May 13, 1897. Isaacs continued as editor until October 3, 1907, when he was succeeded by Peter A. Ruhl.

In 1911 the Press was made a daily paper. Two years later Ruhl sold his interest to Nathan Stout who ran it, assisted by Frank Kellow, for a year longer. Stout then sold the paper for \$8,000 to John T. Murphy, a newspaper publisher of Superior, Wis., who wintered in Fort Myers. Murphy tried repeatedly during the years which followed to induce the managing editor of his Superior Evening Telegram, Carl Hanton, to take charge of the paper here, but Hanton was not interested.

Late in 1914 Murphy sold a part interest in the paper to a nephew, Tom Callahan, who operated it for two years. Callahan then left Fort Myers to acquire a paper at St. Charles, La., and shortly afterward Murphy sold the Press to Henry H. Ford, of North Branch, Mich., and Charles Curtis, of Kalamazoo, Mich. These publishers sold in 1919 to Morton Milford, a nationally known Washington correspondent, who brought in Frank G. Heaton to assist him. In 1922 Milford sold an interest in the paper to George Hosmer and General W. B. Haldeman, Walter Sheppard, W. S.

Creevy and Dr. Franklin Miles also put money into the paper. In 1924 Milford went to Miami and Hosmer bought out the others. After the crash, Barron G. Collier helped finance the paper and by 1931 had a controlling interest.

In the meantime, early in 1920, another Tropical News was established in Fort Myers, this one by Peter J. Bentz, of Oshkosh, Neb., who was assisted by four sons and a daughter: Clyde, Belvy, Harold, Walter and Fern. The first issue appeared February 24, 1920. The paper was published first as a semi-weekly and then as a daily.

Late in 1924 a controlling interest in the paper was purchased by Harrison Fuller who had resigned a position as assistant managing editor of the St. Paul Pioneer Press to form a publicity agency partnership with Carl Hanton, who then was a member of the Pioneer Press staff. The purchase price was \$35,000. Hanton, who had refused tempting offers several times before to come to Fort Myers, was finally induced by Fuller to become the managing editor and he came early in 1925. Three years later Fuller went to New York to become associated with E. & J. Seligman & Co., and Hanton assumed entire responsibility for the paper.

In June, 1931, the Tropical News and the Press were merged by their respective heads, Hanton and Collier. The consolidated newspaper, the News-Press, was published first as an afternoon newspaper and then, in response to requests from readers, it was changed into a morning paper. The paper is published by the News-Press Publishing Co., of which Hanton is president. In 1948 the paper was being edited by William R. Spear with Chesley Perry as general manager.

The Florida Press Association in November, 1948, awarded a plaque to the News-Press after declaring it was the best newspaper published in any Florida city of from five to twenty thousand population.

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"Hello Stranger," a monthly guide book for visitors to Fort Myers, has been published since April, 1944, by Florence Fritz.

A former Red Cross worker who came to Fort Myers in 1935 for her health, Miss Fritz started the publication during the war to make soldiers stationed at camps near Fort Myers feel at home and to give them information regarding southwest Florida. The guide, which is unusually well written and entertaining, proved so popular that Miss Fritz continued publishing it after the war ended. It has a large local circulation and is sent by Miss Fritz to subscribers in forty-three states and several foreign countries.

## POST OFFICE

Mail service for the small settlement of Fort Myers was started by the Post Office Department August 22, 1876, when W. M. Hendry was appointed postmaster and a post office was established in Hendry's store on the northeast corner of First and Hendry.

The office was called "Myers" upon insistence of Washington officials and was not changed to "Fort Myers" until November 9, 1901.

Postmasters have been: Hendry, from 8-22-1876 to 8-2-1879; Howell A. Parker, from 8-22-1879 to 11-2-1884; Zenas W. Brown, from 11-3-1884 to 4-23-1886; James W. Bain, from 4-23-1886 to 9-4-1887; Edward L. Evans, from 9-5-1887 to 8-1-1889; Mrs Olive E. Stout, from 8-2-1889 to 9-21-1893; Edward L. Evans, from 9-22-1893 to 8-21-1897; Mrs. Olive E. Stout, from 8-22-1897 to 1-18-1906; Walter F. Mickle, from 1-18-1906 to 3-15-1910; Isaac E. Foxworthy, from 3-15-1910 to 1-12-1914; Corinne T. Summerlin, from 1-12-1914 to 1-12-1922; Boyd C. Foxworthy, from 1-12-1922 to 5-1-1924; Colonel Halgrim, from 5-1-1924 to 1-26-1925; J. E. Brecht, from 1-26-1925 to 11-16-1933; Nat G. Walker, from 11-16-1933 to 7-17-1934; Walter B. Walters, from 7-17-1934 to present.

The post office was moved by the various postmasters from place to place in the downtown section until 1924 when the government leased quarters in the newly constructed Arcade at First and Broadway. It remained in the Arcade until the new Federal building was constructed on First between Lee and Jackson. (See Chapter VIII.)

Employees of the post office who have served twenty years or more are: Wayne Lewis, assistant postmaster; W. J. B. Spillers, superintendent of mails; Della Appleyard, Florence Bridges, R. L. McWilliams, and Fay Quig, clerks, and G. G. Fouts, L. G. Sheets, O. L. Sheets, O. J. Moncrief, A. A. Reynolds and C. M. McWilliams, carriers.

## PUBLIC LIBRARY

The first public reading room, predecessor of the public library of today, was opened Wednesday, March 18, 1903, in a small room adjoining the E. M. Williams drug store on the northeast corner of First and Hendry. It was established by the Woman's Club, of which Mrs. Julia Hanson was then president. Books, magazines and newspapers were supplied by club members and winter residents.



The club had to vacate its quarters in November, 1904, when Harvie E. Heitman started to clear the site preparatory to building the Bradford Hotel. The books were stored and the reading room was not reopened until February 8, 1906, when it was re-established in a small building on the southwest corner of First and Jackson which had been used by Frank C. Alderman, Sr., as a law office. Mrs. Olive E. Stout served as the first librarian. Later she alternated with Mrs. Hanson and other club members.

Funds to keep the reading room open were raised mostly by Mrs. Mary Laycock who served as chairman of the funds solicitation committee from 1905 until 1926. Thirty-one subscribers paid \$12.70 a month to pay the librarian and the rent of the building. Money to buy books was obtained by a lending charge of five cents a volume, charged after March 24, 1906. Other books were obtained by a book shower held annually.

Late in 1909 the reading room, which by then was called a public library, was moved to the Roberts Building on the southeast corner of First and Jackson. It remained there until 1926 when it was moved to the vacated Harvie Heitman home which had just been moved from the present post office site back to Bay Street. This home, many times remodeled, was used originally as officers' quarters during the Seminole War days.

After moving to its new home, the library was taken over by a library association and in order to obtain money from the city, the association deeded the library to the city in November, 1927. Thereafter it was directed by a library board and maintained by the city. The first board members were Julien C. Rogers, Mrs. Harry A. Laycock, Mrs. Byron Hough, Miss Sara Muriel and Claude Ogilvie.

Mrs. Laura C. Gephart was appointed librarian in 1927 and served until November, 1947, when she retired to go to the Eastern Star Home at St. Petersburg. She was succeeded by Miss Etta L. Slaughter who had served as assistant librarian since 1937. Miss Slaughter's assistant in 1948 was Mrs Ethel C. Brown.

In December, 1938, the library was moved to the old Elks Home on First Street which had just been purchased from the city by the American Legion for use as its post home. Plans for a fine new library were drawn by Mrs. Thomas A. Edison who promised to donate enough money to construct the building. World War II delayed construction and Mrs. Edison died without making any provision for the library. Instead, she donated Seminole Lodge and adjoining property to the city for use as an Edison Memorial.

Plans for a library to be built by public subscription in Waterfront Park were under way late in 1948.

Members of the library board in 1948 were Mrs. Harry A. Laycock, Miss M. Flossie Hill, Mrs. Virgil C. Robb, Miss Gertrude Heron, and Mrs. J. M. Hill.

## ORGANIZATIONS

### Women's Community Club

The Women's Community Club is an outgrowth of the Women's Civic Club organized in 1907 by ten women who banded together to try to do something about getting the cows off the streets. More than a year passed before they succeeded. The club's name soon was changed to Civic League.

The club members later led in a movement to beautify the city by planting trees along the streets. During World War I they rented a plot of ground from the Coast Line railroad and planted it with shrubs and flowers. It was used for years as a city park.

Before the city assumed the responsibility for cleaning the city streets, the league members paid colored men to do the work.

Their next-main project was to provide benches on the streets. They started by buying a few benches and sold advertisements on them to help pay the expense. As more money was raised, additional benches were purchased.

In 1927 members of the organization incorporated under the name of the Women's Community Club of Fort Myers. Charter members were: Mrs. Rosamond Lee Chadwick, Mrs. Bertie Laycock, Mrs. Mildred Farnum, Mrs. Ruth Cralle, Mrs. Rachel Miles, Miss Josephine Stadler, Mrs. Jessie Curtright, Mrs. Elizabeth Hoyer, Mrs. Bessie Boyd, Mrs. Luella Hubbard, Mrs. Hazel Bannister, Mrs. Belle Hendry Evans, Mrs. Ellen Robb, Mrs. Elizabeth Miles and Mrs. Laura Tichnor.

In 1938 the Community Club, with the Junior Chamber of Commerce, helped the late Ronald Halgrim carry out his dream of commemorating the birthday of Thomas A. Edison by putting on a Pageant of Light. The pageant is now sponsored by the Junior Chamber with the Community Club as co-sponsor and all other civic organizations helping with the various entertainments. The Community Club nominates and elects the King of Light and the gentlemen of his Court while the Jaycees elect the Queen and her court. The club also puts on the Coronation and the Royal Ball.

At present the club gives a card party and tea each month during the tourist season for winter visitors and club members, helps the Chamber of Commerce and Jaycees in their numerous activities, helps to prepare and serve lunch for the Pre-School picnic, chaperones Youth Center dances, provides hostesses for the Yacht Club party given annually in connection with the Fort Myers-Tampa yacht races, and last year provided fresh flowers regularly for the Thomas A. Edison home.

The club still carries on a beautification program and last year bought and planted a number of the new Barbara Hendry bougainvillia.

During World War II the club members had full charge of entertainments at the Civic Center, with other organizations assisting, for the benefit of service men stationed at Page Field and Buckingham Army Air Base.

Presidents of the organization have been: Mrs. Olive E. Stout, Mrs. I. E. Foxworthy, Mrs. William F. Glynn, Mrs. Ben Tinstman, Mrs. Charles F. Miles, Mrs. Clarence Chadwick, Mrs. Dean Turner, Mrs. Richmond Dean, Mrs. Watt Lawler, Mrs. Paul Franklin, Mrs. Jim Clements, Mrs. Harry Laycock, Mrs. S. D. Bissel, Mrs. Donnie O. Durrance, Mrs. Carl Roberts, Mrs. George Elvey, Mrs. John O. Zipperer, Mrs. James Hill III, and Mrs. Howard Daubman. In 1948 the club had over three hundred members.

### Lee County Chamber of Commerce

The Lee County Chamber of Commerce is an outgrowth of the Lee County Board of Trade and other organizations formed at various times to promote the county.

The Board of Trade was organized in 1904 primarily to help the Atlantic Coast Line railroad secure a right of way into Fort Myers. When that was accomplished the organization became almost inactive, due largely to factional squabbling among its members. When one faction proposed something for the betterment of the community, the other faction opposed it, just as a matter of principle.

During 1912 the Board members called an armistice in their warfare and employed their first full-time, paid secretary, Allen H. Roberts, of Jacksonville. A booklet advertising the city and county was published and was so well received that city council approved a half-mill publicity tax to continue the good work. The tax brought in \$2,850 the first year.

After functioning smoothly for several years the Board once more began to be

bothered by factional differences and other organizations began to be formed: the Boosters Club, the Accelerator Club and the Fifty Thousand Club. Finally, in 1921, the Chamber of Commerce was organized, composed largely of men who favored the early construction of the Tamiami Trail. The Board of Trade fought for the Dixie Highway and the two groups were constantly battling.

Records of the Chamber covering its early years were lost in a fire at the Royal Palm Hotel; consequently an exact history of the organization cannot be given.

It is believed that the first secretary was able and aggressive L. A. Whitney who came here from St. Petersburg. Whitney performed his work well but was such a zealous Tamiami Trail champion that when the Chamber and the Board decided in 1922 to cease fighting and join forces, he had to resign—he had made too many enemies in the ranks of the Board's membership.

Since 1923 the Chamber of Commerce has worked untiringly and to relate its activities would be like repeating the history of the city. Composed of the city's most progressive citizens, it has aided in countless ways to make Fort Myers a better place in which to live. It has advocated and obtained numerous public improvements, has advertised the city throughout the nation, has helped to organize clubs and societies for winter visitors, and has supported every worthwhile project designed to advance the city's interests.

Men who served the Chamber as president during the 1920's were E. G. Wilkinson, William T. Harley, A. L. White, Vernon Widerquist, R. Q. Richards, S. O. Godman and R. A. Henderson, Jr. Secretaries during this period were A. Cavalli, Don Wilkie and A. A. Coulter.

Presidents of the Chamber since 1928 have been: George E. Judd, J. D. Lynn, Harry Fagan, Sidney Davis, David Shapard, Sam Fitzsimmons, W. H. Reynolds, Carl Hanton, G. Howerton, W. S. Turner, G. H. Alexander, A. W. D. Harris and Lee O. Daniel. Secretaries have been Ronald Halgrim, B. McGrath, W. T. Simpson, W. D. Seabrook and A. J. Dwyer.

Men who have served the organizations as directors during the past five years include: George Allen, G. H. Alexander, Harold Crant, Harry Fagan, Paul Franklin, A. W. D. Harris, A. A. Hamel, Ralph E. Kurtz, Walter Moody, Frank Nash, Carl Roberts, Harry Stringfellow, Milton Thompson, W. S. Turner, George Whitehurst, Jr., Gilmer Heitman, Jr., Fred

Wesemeyer, Leonard Santini, R. A. Henderson, Jr., Sidney Davis, L. C. Curtright, H. C. Case, Graydon Jones, Robert Cody Brown, George Judd, J. O. Zipperer, Godfrey Santini, D. W. Ireland, Capt. A. L. Kinzie, Shelby Shanklin, Charles Best, Ed W. Smith and J. Irving Holmes.

### **Junior Chamber of Commerce**

The Fort Myers Junior Chamber of Commerce, one of the most active groups in the city, was organized in 1931 but records of the first eight years of its organization have been lost.

In 1940 the organization was rechartered and became affiliated with the state and national organization. Past presidents have been: Thomas Howard, 1939; Gilbert Parker, 1940; Carl Roberts, 1941; Charles Bevis, 1942-43; Charles Best, 1944; George Crawford, 1945; Graydon Jones, 1946, and Robert Henderson, III.

Officers in 1948 were: George Whitehurst, Jr., president; J. C. Stepp, secretary; Joe Pendleton, treasurer; Gus Thomas, Billy Reynolds and Ted McGrath, vice-presidents, and Dan Harlacher, executive secretary. In 1948 the Jaycees had 204 members.

Each year the club promotes community projects to provide entertainment for the city and also to raise money for civic improvements.

The biggest project of the organization is the annual Pageant of Light, a week-long celebration to commemorate Thomas A. Edison, the city's first nationally famed winter resident. The pageant, held the week that includes February 11, includes such events as the fashion show, choral concert, gopher derby, street dance, water pageant, king and queen's invitation dance, beach day fishing contest, baby parade, shuffleboard contest, coronation ball and grand parade. The King and Queen of Light reign over the week's celebration.

### **Rotary Club**

The Rotary Club of Fort Myers received its charter in April, 1922. Charter members were: James Coffey, L. C. Chase, Harry Davison, Orris Davison, John Gay, Leslie Brent, W. A. Hailey, R. A. Henderson, Jr., James E. Hendry, Jr., Thomas Howes, Carl McClure, J. E. Morris, Ed Page, A. E. Raymond, Peter Schupp, Amos Smith, Ed Smith, Edro H. Sikes and Frank Valentine.

Members of the club in September, 1948, were: Dr. C. M. Askew, Louis Batastini, Lester Baker (p.p.), Thomas M. Biggar (p.p.), Fred H. Bryant, Carlton Case, J. L. Clarkson, E. M. Conroy, Byron Cooper, Dr. H. E. Cunningham, Tom

Derrington, Sam Echelbarger, John Henry Fears, J. A. Franklin, Sr., (p.p.), Paul Franklin (p.p.), Clinton Freel (p.p.), R. S. Fuller, Lynn Gerald, George Goetz, Dr. Angus Grace, Dr. Walter Grace, Dr. W. H. Grace, Bill Harley, A. W. D. Harris, Don Hawkes, Gilmer Heitman, Jr., E. B. Henderson, R. A. Henderson, Jr., R. A. Henderson, III, J. Fred Hosea, Tom Howard, E. W. Ireland, Sam Johnson (p.p.), Dr. H. Quillian Jones (p.p.), George E. Judd, James Kelly, Sam Kosiner, R. E. Kurtz, J. P. Loftin, C. H. McGarrity (p.p.), Harry McWhorter, W. D. Moody (p.p.), Harold Moreland, Dr. R. B. Newton, R. G. Nightingale, Bryant Pearce, Joe Penderton, B. A. Perks, Chesley Perry (p.p.), W. C. Persons, Ben Plummer, DeCoursey Pollock, Sr. DeCoursey Pollock, Jr., J. B. Randall, W. A. Reynolds, B. B. Rodd, Joe Rust, Dr. Ed Saunders, Richard Severly, Jack Shanklin, J. A. Sheppard, Rev. Thomas Craigie Smart, Ed. Smith, J. Tom Smoot, Ernest Stevens, George Thrall, Ray Tipton, Walter S. Turner, Jr., Walter B. Walters, H. P. Welch, H. J. Wood and Dr. C. J. Zimmerman. (p.p.) stands for past president.

Officers of the club in 1948 were: Gilmer Heitman, Jr., pres.; Walter Moody, v-p.; Brant Rodd, sec'y, and Lester Baker, treas. Directors: Byron Cooper, Jack Shanklin and Ernest Stevenson.

### **Kiwanis Club**

The Kiwanis Club of Fort Myers was organized April 28, 1922, with fifty-one charter members. It received its charter June 21, 1922. Charter members were: W. W. Stone, R. Q. Richards, T. Gay Brough, J. F. Pixton, H. G. Stout, D. C. Pollock, C. W. Shriner, C. C. Pursley, J. F. Allred, C. P. Staley, A. G. Powell, John M. Boring, J. E. Foxworthy, N. H. Hunter, C. Q. Stewart, Walton Gilliam, Dr. M. F. Johnson, Martin E. Schultz, Dr. H. E. Parnell, T. H. Phillips, Clyde Gonzalez, H. A. Stahn, W. F. Gwynne, H. N. Denham, G. M. Heitman, Dr. V. H. Voorhis, J. D. Lynn, H. C. Case, J. E. Tooke, D. S. Borland, B. C. Foxworthy, Dr. G. W. Benn, J. B. Parker, Dr. A. P. Hunter, M. M. Milford, W. O. Sheppard, E. L. Evans, Dr. K. A. Frieske, J. M. Clark, W. B. Graham, H. W. Grady, S. O. Godman, L. A. Wingate, D. W. Ireland, L. C. Curtright, W. P. Franklin, W. D. Wilson, Dr. J. W. Baird, C. W. Bartleson, I. E. Foxworthy and C. M. Foxworthy.

First officers of the club were: R. Q. Richards, pres.; L. A. Wingate, v-p.; Allen G. Powell, sec'y, and James F. Pixton, treas. Directors were: D. S. Borland, H. C. Case, C. P. Staley, Dr. A. P. Hunter, L. C. Curtright, J. E. Foxworthy and M. M. Milford.

Club members in 1948 were: Dick McConnell, Gerald Moody, Harold Case, Wilbur Martindale, W. Eric Dance, Dick Stephenson, Vercil Senseman, Harry Fagan, Rick Richards, Jr., Murry Fussell, Bob McCollough, J. G. Goodyear, DeWitt Farabee, Ken Durland, E. L. Lord, Chas. Moore, Jack Holst, Robert Faulk, Jock Sutherland, George Elvey, Nelson Hough, George E. Allen, A. G. Williams, Lee O. Daniel, Guy Strayhorn, Charles Miller, Cecil Senseman, Frank Prather, Murray Bobbitt, Eustace Sirmons, John Cody, J. B. Roberts, Joe Ansley, E. D. Griffin, D. C. Ballou, Howard Freeman, Floyd Ellis, M. M. Cornwell, Donnie Durrance, Earl K. Bobbitt, Norwood Strayhorn, Harold Alexander, Marion Powell, Russell Rich, Gordon Uzzell, George Case, Vernon Headrick; Travers Parkinson, Chas. Engelhardt, John Boring, Jas. C. Sapp, Irving Harris, Harry Satchell, Ken Marmon, Richard Ward, Fred Mellor, Wesley Nott, Wes Rumsey, Chas. Brazzeal, F. E. Starnes, Bill Wiggins, J. R. Harrison, Parke Lewis, Edward Simpson, Douglas Bogue, Bill O'Haver, Harry Fishel, Kenneth Lamb, J. P. McGraw, Ralph Morgan, Frank Watson, John Woolslair, Ray Campbell, Dick Starkey, Dewey Murphy, Carl Heuck, George Fuller.

Past presidents have been: R. Q. Richards, S. O. Godman, Dick Boyd, Walter Turner, Claude F. Lee, Claude Ogilvie, Fred H. Mellor, Nat G. Walker,

Harry McWhorter, C. M. Joyce, R. V. Lee, J. Ross Bynum, Jack Holst, John K. Woolslair, Sidney Davis, Harry Fagan, Joe Ansley, Ed Simpson, R. G. Wilson, F. E. Starnes, Carl P. Heuck, Nelson Hough, J. B. Roberts, Earl K. Bobbitt, Dick McConnell and Harold Alexander. Allen G. Powell served as secretary three years, J. C. McCannon, four years, Frank T. Caldwell, one year, Frank A. Shore, eight years, and W. Eric Dance, ten years.

### Lions Club

The Lions Club of Fort Myers received its charter March 29, 1935. Its charter members were: H. D. Bartleson, Hoy B. Black, Lewis Barber, Frank C. Alderman, Jr., A. B. Baker, C. I. Moore, Jr., Bud Wiltshire, Jr., Irby W. Black, George W. Goorley, A. Eldon Hanshaw, Francis G. Garrison, Thomas S. Luster, W. C. Bell, Jr., Ben Wolfson, Leo W. Englehardt, Phil Parshall, George T. Mame, Charles A. Powell, Jr., and Coe Gusworthy.

First officers of the club were: Dr. Fred Bartleson, pres.; Hoy Black, J. A. Russell and Charles S. Moore, Jr., vice-presidents; Charles Powell, Jr., sec'y-treas.; Davis Tarrer, Lion tamer, and Warren B. Wiltshire, tail twister. Directors were Frank C. Alderman, Jr., Donald Hawkins, Thomas Luster, Francis C. Garrison, Irby Black and Wilson Ward.

Past presidents have been: Dr. Bartleson, A. B. Baker, H. D. Black, George T.



This dilapidated house, located on Bay Street just east of Hendry, is the oldest building in Fort Myers. Many persons incorrectly believe it was one of the buildings of the old fort but it was constructed by W. M. Hendry in 1875 for use as his home.

Mann, Frank C. Alderman, Jr., Ben Wolfson, James B. Kelley, R. C. Tooke, Robert C. Halgrim, Martin A. Way, Irby W. Black, Dr. J. V. Giddens, W. J. B. Spillers, W. C. Griffin, Robert M. Woods, Heard M. Edwards and Carl Michael.

Club members in 1948 were: Sam Abbott, Clarence L. Babbitt, Russ Bailes, E. B. Britt, Bob Banks, J. E. Barton, Cecil Bennett, Joel Bennett, Charlie Bevis, Hoy Black, Irby Black, E. M. Brown, J. T. Beckett, A. J. Bruner, Lefty Barker, L. H. Blouch, J. D. Brown, S. N. Branch, J. A. Cannon, Charlie Chandler, Bert Chapman, A. B. Chipley, A. L. Crow, H. G. Crawford, Carl Creel, Tommy Colcord, Wilmer Daniels, Simon DeMarco, Howard Daubman, Tony Dwyer, Grimes Dennis, Heard Edwards, Leo Englehart, Bill Evans, Walter Edelblut, Tom Fink, L. H. Finney, Roger Ford, Bob Foxworthy, Roy Frizzell, Ralph Fry, Howard Fitzgerald, J. F. Gibbs, J. T. Gibbs, Chas. Gnau, P. D. Goodyear, Herman Gluckman, George Goorley, P. A. Geraci, M. E. Gastoh, J. V. Giddens, Chic Hall, Bob Halgram, Jim Harper, Virgil Harris, Bert Hoffman, Ernest Hart, Mike Hauk, Buck Jeffcott, Eddie Johnson, Murriell Jones, Verne Jungferman, Lowell Jamison, Tommy Kurtz, Harry Keith, Arthur Kelly, W. L. King, Stanley Knight, Pancho Littlejohn, George Lynch, Mike Long, C. V. McClaren, R. L. Macon, J. E. Mattern, Carl Michael, Ernest Mitts, R. S. Moore, Moon Mullis, Joe Norfleet, W. H. Ogden, W. E. Odom, Allen Parsons, Hugh Richards, B. W. Small, R. G. Simpson, Jim Simpson, W. J. B. Spillers, Harry Schooley, Clarence Silecox, Ray Smith, Bob Spencer, Hewitt Spaulding, J. H. Thomas, Herb Thomas, Ed Thomas, Clarence Tooke, Snag Thompson, Martin Way, Clemmie Williams, David Washburn, T. W. Weeks, B. H. Welch, W. F. Walcott, W. A. Walden and E. M. Webb.

Past presidents of the club have been: Dr. Fred Bartleson, A. B. Baker, H. B. Black, George T. Mann, Frank C. Alderman Jr., Ben Woolfson, James B. Kelley, R. C. Tooke, Robert C. Halgrim, Martin A. Way, Irby W. Black, Dr. J. V. Giddens, W. J. B. Spillers, W. C. Griffin, Robert M. Woods, Heard M. Edwards and Carl Michael.

### Exchange Club

The Exchange Club of Fort Myers received its charter June 12, 1947. The first officers were: Curtis R. House, president; C. A. Powell, Jr., vice-president; W. W. Watson, secretary, and Douglas H. Parker. Directors included the officers and Frank C. Alderman, Jr., Rexford W. Gilliam, John L. Maker, Marshall W. Anderson, C. W. Starnes and Joe Crosby.

Club members in September, 1948, were: Marshall W. Anderson, Russell O. Blemke, Monroe S. Bobst, James M. Boyd, Jesse B. Brown, Harry A. Chernin, Wade M. Cotton, Joe M. Crosby, Joseph J. Crotty, George D'Alessandro, Peter D'Alessandro, Sam M. Galloway, Walter J. Ganey, Paul E. Geisenhof, Edwin W. Giebel, Vaughn Gillespie, Rexford W. Gilliam, A Louis Girardin, James M. Hill, Jr., Curtis R. House, C. E. Johnson, Graydon Jones, Girard E. Kinzie, Robert P. Lamont, III, Edwin H. Mathis, D. H. Parker, Reinardo R. Perez, Mel E. Porter, C. A. Powell, Jr., Joseph H. Settle, John L. Shay, B. W. Small, C. W. Starnes, Steve Taminosian, W. W. Watson, Joe Weber, Jr., James W. Wiltshire, Warren B. Wiltshire, and F. R. Zucker.

### United Spanish War Veterans

The General Arthur McArthur Camp No. 16, United Spanish War Veterans, was organized in 1933 with twenty-two charter members: C. W. Smith, James Hilliard, F. C. Des Rochees, Simon Loeb, E. C. Young, Samuel J. Johnson, Wm. Francis Gwynne, Alvin Gorton, L. M. Stroup, R. C. Ellis, James W. Swartz, T. W. Hammer, George L. Stephens, Morgan L. Lewis, Frank E. Modie, Joseph F. Smith, H. L. Reeves, Charles H. Griner, Robert R. King, J. M. McWilliams, Allen B. Tucker and John N. Steel.

Past commanders have been: F. E. Modie, Simon Leob, C. W. Hewitt, F. C. Des Rochees, H. L. Reibling, Milton S. Hathaway, Chappel Ellis, Lewis R. Woods, Thomas W. Burdette, Alvin Gorton, Samuel L. Ditto, Simon Loeb, Wallace G. Skidmore. R. J. Nightengale was commander in 1948.

Members of the camp in 1948 were: Samuel R. Angel, W. R. Alexander, R. A. Barratt, T. J. Barrett, Thomas W. Burdette, Samuel L. Ditto, James W. Drawdy, R. C. Ellis, Samuel L. Elwell, Alvin Gorton, Charles E. Griner, C. W. Hewitt, Harry F. Hitner, Herman Hinkel, Robert R. King, Luther P. Lord, Simon Loeb, Joseph E. Lupton R. M. Manson, Alexander McKinnon, R. J. Nightengale, R. M. Paul, Paul Rickards, Henry Riebling, W. G. Skidmore, T. A. Stevens, C. C. Trawbridge, W. I. Tooley, Scott Trammell, E. G. Bowman and Charles S. Salmon.

### PAGEANT OF LIGHT

Thomas A. Edison, the famous inventor who spent nearly fifty winters in Fort Myers, is honored in a unique way by the City of Palms.

In the later years of his life Edison was interviewed each year on his birthday, February 11, by reporters from northern

cities and stories about him appeared in newspapers throughout the country. It was not until 1928, however, that any public celebration was held and then Edison consented to attend a birthday party given by the city to which every school child in the county was invited.

Because of Edison's failing health the party was not repeated but in 1931, the year of his death, he marked his birthday by attending the dedication of the Thomas A. Edison Bridge.

After Edison's death on October 12, 1931, residents planned a memorial service to be given February 11, 1932, and it was held in Evans Park with a chorus of fifty singing the inventor's favorite songs and the audience joining in the chorus. School children placed a wreath on the monument and Mrs. Edison, who was not present, sent flowers to each patient at Lee Memorial Hospital. Speakers included Dr. Ludd H. Spivey, president of Southern College, and Judge Nathan G. Stout.

No observance was held the following year due to Mrs. Edison's absence but in 1934 brief outdoor services were conducted in Evans Park by the National Plant, Flower and Fruit Guild. Brief services also were held in the municipal auditorium in 1935 and 1936 and in 1937 the city churches sponsored a joint service.

The inventor's birthday was commemorated in a more elaborate manner in 1938 when the first pageant of light was held, sponsored by the Woman's Community Club and the Junior Chamber of Commerce. The event lasted three days beginning with a coronation and ball on Friday night, a parade on Saturday with forty floats and four bands, and a memorial service Sunday. James E. Hendry, Jr., and Miss Virginia Sheppard were crowned king and queen.

The pageant of light since 1938 has become of steadily increasing importance and in 1947 the event attracted more than 15,000 persons to Fort Myers from all parts of the state. In addition to the parade, in which scores of floats and many bands participated, numerous other entertainments were provided. The pageant had become one of the most outstanding and unusual fiestas in all Florida.

## FORT MYERS HOSPITALS

Long before Fort Myers became nationally famous as a winter resort it boasted of having the finest hospital in all South Florida, if not in the entire state.

The hospital was splendidly equipped, had large and airy rooms which were kept



*Photo Courtesy of Lee County Chamber of Commerce*

The home of the American Legion on First Street.

immaculate, and was two and one-half stories high. It reportedly cost \$30,000.

No person now living ever received treatment in this institution or even saw it. Construction work on it was started nearly one hundred years ago, in 1851, when Fort Myers was being used by the Army as the center of operations against the Seminoles, hidden in the vastnesses of the Big Cypress and the Glades.

So much money was spent by the Army on the hospital, as well as on other buildings at the fort, that the quartermaster's office ordered an investigation. Major J. McKinstry came to look things over and reported that in his opinion "unnecessarily expensive buildings have been erected and a lavish and uncalled for expenditure of public money has obtained at the post, particularly for the hospital building."

The hospital did not survive long after the Civil War. When the conflict ended the fort was abandoned and lumber-hungry pioneers came up the Caloosahatchee in sloops and schooners from all parts of the West Coast to get materials for building homes. They did a thorough demolition job, not only on the hospital but on almost all the other buildings. They tore off the cedar shingles, ripped off the siding and pulled up the floors, yanked out the windows and took down the doors. When they finally departed, the once-proud fort was a shambles. And the hospital had ceased to exist.

That was in 1866. A half century elapsed before Fort Myers got another hospital and then only after a hard struggle.

Incorporated as a town in 1885, Fort Myers slowly but steadily forged ahead. Known in the beginning as only a frontier "cow town" it started to become famous as a winter resort and its population was swelled by sunshine seekers from all parts of the nation. Frontier ways were abandoned one by one and the progressive people of the up-and-coming town began demanding a hospital. But for years all their efforts were unsuccessful. Persons who became critically ill or who needed operations had to be taken to Tampa or Key West—or cared for at home.

However, a determined drive to get a hospital was launched January 2, 1912, at a meeting of representatives of all civic organizations, churches, businesses and professions—and everyone present agreed that the drive would be continued until the long-wanted institution became a fact.

A working committee was appointed consisting of Mayor Louis A. Hendry, Dr. J. E. Brecht, president of the medical society, and the Reverends C. N. Thomas, G. F. Scott and A. M. Hildebrand. Others

present at the meetings included L. S. Stewart, C. Q. Stewart, L. N. Stroup, Nathan G. Stout, Mrs. Olive E. Stout, Mrs. E. Hutchinson, Mrs. William Hanson, Mrs. Harry Laycock, Mrs. George F. Ireland, Mrs. A. M. Brandon, Mrs. O. L. Johns, Mrs. P. A. Ruhl, Mrs. W. S. Manson and Mrs. C. N. Thomas.

The city council magnanimously voted \$300 to help pay for a hospital building and funds were solicited from the general public. But money came in slowly and the project hung fire for months and months. No progress at all was made, in fact, until after one of Fort Myers' most historic events—the razing of the old county courthouse.

The instigator of the court house demolition performance was William H. Towles, then chairman of the county commissioners. Foiled twenty years before when he tried to get a first-class courthouse for the county, Towles was determined in 1914 to get the kind of building he thought the county deserved. Other commissioners agreed with him and a contract for a modern structure was awarded. But construction work was blocked by many persons who believed the old building was too good to be destroyed—and the commissioners were enjoined from proceeding.

Fiery "Bill" Towles finally took matters into his own hands. On October 26, 1914, he gave orders to Contractor F. P. Heifner to tear down the building—and the work was started immediately after two citizens departed from Fort Myers by train to get another injunction, unaware, of course, of Towles' plans.

The workmen started in on the court-house steeple and ripped it off. Then they took out the windows and the doors and started tearing off the siding. They worked frenziedly, and did not stop until the court-house was so thoroughly razed that it could not possibly be restored.

Lumber from the demolished building was turned over by the county commissioners to the hospital board. A site at Victoria and Grand was secured and work of constructing a new hospital was started.

But progress was made slowly. Donations were few and far between. Only a few of the more progressive people helped push the project along. Many still believed that a hospital was just a place to die in and since they did not care about dying they did not care about a hospital. Even some of the physicians were apathetic and a few were openly antagonistic.

Finally, however, the hospital was finished. It was two stories high and had four rooms for patients. The grounds were

desolate—no grass, no shrubs, no trees. Shacks in which colored people lived were close by. The equipment was most meager. There were no chairs for visitors to sit on and in the kitchen there were no pots or pans or even dishes.

The Lee County Hospital, as it was first called, was opened October 3, 1916, with Mrs. Edith Davidson, former superintendent of the Arcadia Hospital, in charge. The president of the hospital board then was Carl F. Roberts and the other members were C. W. Carlton, Dr. W. B. Winkler, Mrs. Harry Laycock, Miss Cordelia Nutt, Mrs. Julia Hanson, Mrs. Olive E. Stout, and Miss Minnie Gardner. The staff members were Doctors Winkler, Ernest Brecht, A. P. Hunter and G. F. Henry. Dr. Daniel McSwain, of Arcadia, was the chief surgeon.

The first patient was Sam Thompson who was rushed in when he suffered an acute attack of appendicitis. Dr. McSwain came in from Arcadia on the next train and Thompson was operated on. Superintendent Davidson had to go to Dr. Henry's office to sterilize the bandages. But, despite the inadequate facilities, Thompson lived.

Members of the hospital board worked untiringly to get improvements. C. W. Carlton devoted almost all his time to the institution, without remuneration. Walter G. Langford donated sorely needed surgical equipment. The Order of Eastern Star held many benefit showers, the first on October 31, 1916. The Daughters of the Confederacy sponsored fund-raising drives. Members of this organization urged that the institution be named the Robert E. Lee Memorial Hospital, and the board agreed to make the change. The name later was shortened to the Lee Memorial Hospital.

Two additions to the original building were made during the following quarter

century and the hospital finally had sixteen rooms, with accommodations for twenty-two patients. The chief benefactor of the institution was a retired importer of New York, Edwin A. Richard, one of the best friends Fort Myers ever had. His contributions helped immeasurably to keep it open during the lean years of the depression.

Others who donated included Charles A. Stadler, Mrs. Addison W. Iglehart, Cordelia Nutt, Richmond Dean, Martha H. Elms, Electra Miles Porter, Edwin H. Adams, Margaret McLean Kidd, and the Rotary Club. These donors gave either wards or rooms; numerous others made smaller contributions.

Plans for a new hospital, ordered by the hospital board, were drawn in the late Thirties by the architectural firm of Frank W. Bail & Associates and the project was approved by WPA as one of its last in Florida. Due to the fact that WPA forces were then steadily shrinking as a result of improved economic conditions, only a skeleton crew of workmen, most inexperienced, was kept on the job and the hospital was not completed until the spring of 1943, at a cost of \$200,000. The new building was officially opened April 18, 1943.

Members of the hospital board then were: Harry J. Wood, president; F. Irving Holmes, vice-president; Virgil C. Robb, treasurer, and David Ireland, Sidney Davis and William G. Clark, board members.

Contributors to the new hospital included the Methodist Golden Cross, Mrs. Helen Pratt Sheppard, Mrs. George L. Leonard, Richard DeMille Brown, Mrs. W. G. Clark, George L. Leonard, Daughters of the Confederacy, Janet B. Casey, Mrs. Tom Smoot, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Prather, Mrs. Charles Morton Cist and John H. Lynch.



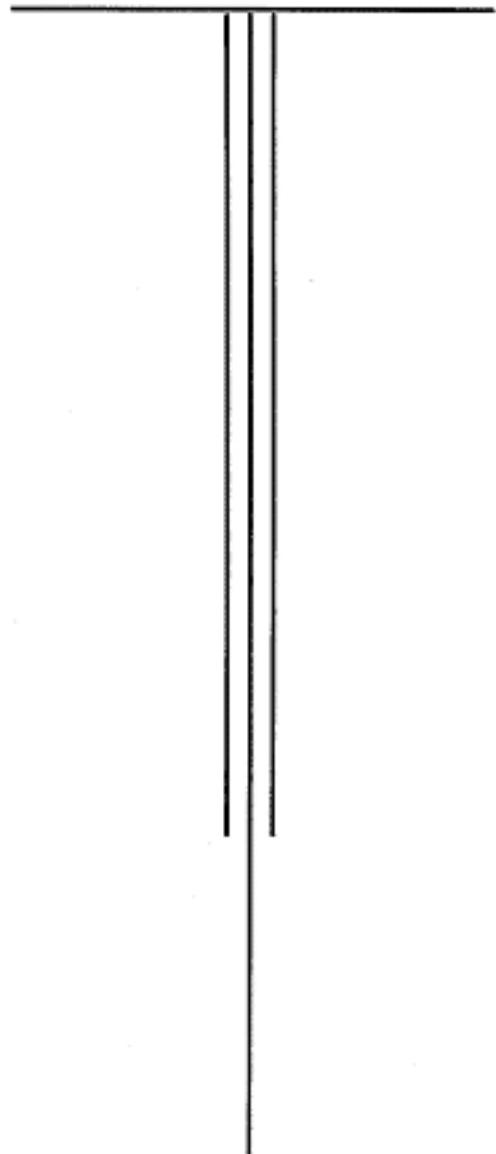
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# WHO'S WHO

IN

## FORT MYERS



"History is the essence of innumerable biographies."

*—Thomas Carlyle.*

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### MAJOR JAMES EVANS

Major James Evans, founder of the town of Fort Myers, was born February 12, 1823, in Suffolk, Va., a descendant of an old Virginia family. He attended Joe Holloman's school in Suffolk and later learned to be a surveyor.

As related in the general text, Evans settled on the site of Fort Myers in 1859, left because of the Civil War, purchased the property from the United States in the 1870's, and employed a surveyor to lay out a town site. On September 20, 1880, he purchased 275 additional acres close to the town, paying 75 cents an acre. Soon afterward he platted Evans Addition No. 1 and recorded a plat for Evans Addition No. 2 on January 2, 1887. (See Chapter III.)

Well liked by Fort Myers people, Major Evans was elected often to public office. He served seven years on the town council and from 1892 through 1900 as county tax assessor. He took a keen interest in children and on October 2, 1878, donated an acre at Second and Jackson as a school site. He also donated four lots at Anderson and Evans on October 5, 1885, to the Protestant Episcopal Church.

Major Evans died January 12, 1901, and his body was taken to Virginia and buried in Cedar Hill Cemetery in Suffolk. His will, dated September 12, 1894, was filed March 21, 1901. He willed all his property to his nieces, Mrs. Elizabeth A. Christie, Julia Anna Norfleet and Lucy Evans Norfleet, all living in Suffolk. Judge George W. Powell named Harvie E. Heitman administrator of the estate. His personal property, appraised at \$7,166.91, consisted largely of notes from persons to whom he had sold land. He also owned 570 lots in the Evans additions, appraised at \$5 a lot, and 450 acres near the town appraised at \$4,800. All his real estate was valued at \$9,830.

### CAPT. MANUEL A. GONZALEZ

Capt. Manuel A. Gonzalez was born in Madrid, Spain, October 22, 1833. When fourteen years old he sailed for Cuba with a party of boys. The ship was wrecked on the Florida coast but all on board managed to get ashore. A few years later he went to Key West where he became a United States citizen. While in Key West he met and married Evalina J. Weatherford, of English descent, who was born in the Bahama Islands in 1836.

During the Seminole uprising of the 1850's, Captain Gonzalez ran a mail boat between Tampa and the Fort Myers. His wife often accompanied him. They liked



MAJOR JAMES EVANS

Fort Myers so well that they decided to make it their home after the Seminoles were conquered. However, the Civil War upset their plans and they were unable to come until April, 1866. (See General Text—Chapter III.)

After settling in Fort Myers, Captain Gonzalez continued to follow the sea and became known as one of the best pilots and seamen in Gulf waters. He also opened the first general store in the infant settlement, selling to passing cattlemen and trading with the Seminoles.

When the government survey was started on the south side of the river in 1872, Captain Gonzales moved from "town" to the edge of the creek now known as Manuel's Branch. During the 1890's, the Gonzalez family moved back into town, building a residence on Monroe Street where the Atlantic Coast Line depot later was built, Mrs. Gonzalez selling to the railroad for \$6,000.

Captain Gonzalez died Tuesday, February 25, 1902. He was survived by his widow and eight children: Mrs. L. C. Stewart, Mrs. C. T. Tooke, Capt. Manuel S., Mrs. T. J. Roberts, J. Edward, Capt. Alfonzo F., William G., and Miss Laura, now Mrs. J. F. Garner. He also was survived by eighteen grandchildren. Mrs. Gonzalez died Sunday, March 19, 1905.

Manuel S. Gonzalez, oldest son of Captain Gonzalez, followed the sea for a number of years, becoming a sailing master. Later he became a contractor and a dealer in lumber and building supplies. Many of the buildings

he constructed are still standing. He was one of the forty-four men who incorporated the town and for many years played an active part in civic affairs. He was married to Irene Haskew. Mrs. Gonzalez died in 1933. He died August 11, 1935, one day before Fort Myers celebrated its fiftieth anniversary as an incorporated town. He was survived by two daughters, Mrs. A. L. Williams and Mrs. Curtis M. Davison, and four sons, Fred, Thomas A., Charles and Leslie.

Thomas A. Gonzalez, a veteran of World War I, was the author of "The Caloosahatchee," an excellent book which dealt with the history of the Fort Myers region. It was published in 1932. Mr. Gonzalez died July 10, 1937.

#### JOSEPH DELORES VIVAS

Joseph Delores Vivas was born October 12, 1845, at Belize, Mexico. When a young man he went to Key West. On March 8, 1866, he was married to Christiana Stirrup, an orphan of English descent who had been raised by Mr. and Mrs. Manuel A. Gonzalez.

Leaving Key West on their honeymoon in Mr. Vivas' sail boat, "San Filo," they arrived in Fort Myers on March 13, 1866. Mrs. Vivas had been at the fort before when a small child, Captain Gonzalez having brought her on one of his trips to the outpost in the late 1850's.

Mr. and Mrs. Vivas built a small log cabin just east of the Gonzalez home. (See General Text—Chapter III.) They lived there until 1883 when Mr. Vivas built a fine, two-story house on the same lot using materials which he brought from Cedar Keys. The house was still standing in 1948, as solid as the day it was built. During the Florida Boom, the Vivas property was sold and the home was moved to the rear of the lot where it now stands. When the boom ended, the property reverted to the Vivas estate.

Although Mr. Vivas was one of the first two settlers in Fort Myers, he had to pay Major Evans \$400 for his home site. (See General Text.) The deed was dated August 16, 1877, a year after the town site was surveyed and platted. The tract, approximately one hundred feet wide, just east of Lee, extended from the river to Second Street.

Vivas was a carpenter and contractor and in 1886 was awarded the contract for building the first bridges over Billy's Creek and Whiskey Creek. He constructed both bridges for \$949. He also built a wharf at the foot of Hendry Street in 1885 for Towles & Hendry for \$1200. Later he built scores of homes in Fort Myers.

Mr. Vivas died October 23, 1909. Mrs. Vivas, who was born August 25, 1850, died March 3, 1930. They had nine children: Mrs. Amelia Allen, Addie, Mrs. Frances Stebbins, Santa, Mrs. Annie Jane Bourne, Rosa Belle, Leonora, Josephine Dolores, and Norman. In 1948 all were living except Addie and Norman.

#### JOHN POWELL

John Powell was born in 1829 in Horry County, South Carolina. In 1850 he married Miss Bellamy, a member of an old Carolina family. Impoverished by the Civil War, he left his native state in 1866 and arrived at Fort Myers with his family early the following year. The only other settlers at that time at the fort were Manuel A. Gonzalez and Joseph Vivas with their families.

For a short time Mr. Powell and his family lived in one of the abandoned fort buildings. Soon after the government survey of the Caloosahatchee region was started in 1872, he moved to the north side of the river to establish a homestead claim. The tract he selected was at a place later called New Prospect.

Mr. Powell started an orange grove on his land by planting seeds from fruit found growing on trees on the fort property. He also raised sugar cane and vegetables and engaged in the cattle business.

When Lee County was created in 1887, he was elected to serve on the board of county commissioners. During the 1890's he served as a member of the school board. He died October 17, 1901, and was survived by six children.

#### GEORGE RENTON SHULTZ

George Renton Shultz was born in Newark, N. J., May 3, 1843. When a youth he learned to become a telegrapher and in 1867 came to Florida to take charge of the Punta Rassa cable station of the International Ocean Telegraph Company.

The station was established in the army barracks built during the Civil War. Mr. Shultz began taking in guests in the early 70's and by the late 80's his establishment had become nationally known as the Tarpon House. The hotel burned in 1906 and Mr. Shultz then organized a company and rebuilt. The new structure was also destroyed by fire late in 1913. (See Index: Shultz Hotel.)

In 1873 Mr. Shultz was married to Josephine Smith of Jersey City, N. J., who later helped him operate his hotel.

Mr. Shultz was at the cable station in 1898 when the message was received telling of the sinking of the U. S. Battleship Maine at Havana, and during the following year he was on duty day and night, handling innumerable messages filed by the government and by newspaper correspondents.

For many years Mr. Shultz held a birthday party annually at his hotel and invited as guests nearly all the leading citizens of Fort Myers and vicinity.

Mr. Shultz died January 25, 1921. He was survived by his widow, Josephine, a daughter, Mrs. Florida Heitman, and a son, Martin.

### CHARLES WESLEY HENDRY

Charles Wesley Hendry was born in Lowndes County, Georgia, July 11, 1824, the son of John and Katie (McFail) Hendry. He was a descendant of Robert Hendry, born March 17, 1752, on the island of Arron, Scotland, who came to America in 1770, served in the Revolutionary War under Light Horse Harry Lee, married Ann Lee and moved to North Carolina after the war.

Coming to Florida with other members of his family in 1851, Charles Hendry settled in Hamilton County and engaged in the cattle business. During the Seminole uprising of the 1850's he served in a Florida Volunteer Boat company and several times brought captured Indians to Fort Myers.

Mr. Hendry was married in 1865 to Mrs. Jane Louise (Brown) Mansfield, who was born at Blountstown, on the Suwannee River, September 13, 1839. Soon afterward they moved to Hillsborough County where their first child, Esther Ann, was born September 12, 1866. They then moved to Manatee County where three more children were born: James A., Alice and Roean.

During the winter of 1872-73, Mr. Hendry joined his cousins, Capt. F. A. and W. Marion Hendry, in driving their herds of cattle below the Caloosahatchee. He lodged his family in a small cabin near what is now Immokolee. There his oldest child, Esther Ann, died on May 17, 1873. Mrs. Hendry then insisted on moving to Fort Myers where she would have neighbors. They arrived in Fort Myers in June. Other Hendry families soon followed. (See Chapter III.)

The Charles W. Hendry family settled first on Billy's Creek but moved to the fort site following the hurricane of October 6, 1873, buying the squatter's right of Bill Clay to land east of what is now Monroe Street. Mr. and Mrs. Hendry sold two acres of this tract to the county for \$2,250 on September 4, 1889, as a site for the courthouse.

Mr. Hendry later took up a homestead south on the river, acquiring title to it on February 10, 1883.



GEORGE R. SHULTZ

During the decade from 1883 to 1893, Mr. Hendry continued in the cattle business, much of his time being spent in Key West where he handled cattle shipped in by other Hendrys and by Dr. T. E. Langford. His family finally moved there and made it their home for a number of years. Mr. Hendry also was engaged in shipping, owning schooners which plied to and from Caribbean ports. He died on July 14, 1893. Soon afterward, Mrs. Hendry moved her family back to Fort Myers, building a home at what is now First and Broadway. She died on June 27, 1908.

James A. Hendry, only son of Mr. and Mrs. Hendry, followed the cattle business all his life. He was known to everyone in Fort Myers as "Pineapple Jim," a nickname he acquired when a youth after he had gone forth on a pineapple foraging expedition. He died August 14, 1941.

Alice Hendry was married twice, first to John Judson Tooke, and after his death, to J. B. McCann. She had one child, Ammie Tooke, who became the wife of James L. Lawrence and had two daughters, Mary Alice, now Mrs. G. W. Sturm, and Ammie Jeanne, now Mrs. John K. Woolslair.

Roean Hendry married T. T. Henderson and had two daughters, Josephine H., now Mrs. Joe H. Gerald, and Alice Roean, who married R. L. Fuller. The children of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald are Judge Lynn Gerald, Mrs. Mary Eleanor Struss, and Sarah Joe Gerald. Mr. and Mrs. Fuller have four children: Helen Roean, Betty, Lowell and Geanne.

Ammie Hendry, born in Fort Myers, was married to B. E. Henderson. She died March 29, 1896.

### CAPT. FRANCIS A. HENDRY

Capt. Francis Asbury Hendry was born in Thomas County, Georgia, November 19, 1833, the oldest son of James Edward and Lydia (Carlton) Hendry. In 1851 he went with his family to Hillsborough County, Florida, and on March 20, 1852, was married to Ardeline Lanier. He then moved to Fort Meade and put his herd of cattle east of Peace River.

He first came to Fort Myers as a dispatch bearer in 1854 and a year later came as a guide for a cavalry company in which he became a lieutenant. During the Civil War he raised a troop of cavalry in Polk County which was attached to Col. Charles J. Munnerlyn's battalion. He served as captain of his troop.

Captain Hendry drove his cattle to the grazing grounds south of the Caloosahatchee, in the Fort Thompson area, in 1870 and a year later began shipping steers to Cuba from Jacob Summerlin's wharf at Punta Rassa. In the summer of 1873 he moved his family to Fort Myers, occupying one of the officers' quarters just east of the Vivas home, where the Royal Palm Hotel was built. About the same time he established a ranch home at Fort Thompson where he spent part of his time.

For more than a decade after moving to Fort Myers, Captain Hendry's herds dominated the open range south of the river and

he became widely known as the cattle king of South Florida. In one year during the 1870's he shipped 12,896 head from Punta Rassa. In 1880 he was reported to be the owner of 50,000 head.

During the 1880's Captain Hendry purchased large tracts in the Fort Thompson area from the state and began improving the breed of cattle by importing pure bred Jerseys. To provide better grazing for the cattle, he planted new grasses from Cuba. Near the turn of the century he sold his ranch to E. E. Goodno and it was later acquired by Henry Ford.

Captain Hendry had a long and active political career. In 1875 and 1877 he served as state senator from the 24th district. In 1885 he took a leading part in the incorporation of Fort Myers as a town and was elected to serve on the first town council. Two years later, when Lee County was created, he was elected as one of the first county commissioners. He later served six terms as representative in the state legislature from Lee County, from 1893 to 1904.

After the Civil War, Captain Hendry was one of the leading advocates of the drainage of the Everglades.

On October 7, 1889, Mr. and Mrs. Hendry sold their Fort Myers home, which they had entirely rebuilt, to their son Louis A. for \$7,000. They then moved to their Fort Thompson home where they lived thereafter. Captain Hendry continued, however, to have an active interest in Fort Myers affairs. (See Index: Hendry, Capt. F. A.)

Captain Hendry was friendly with all the Seminole Indians of South Florida and they held him in such high esteem that when they heard he was dying, Chief Billy Conapachee (q. v.) and his brother Billy Fuel walked sixty miles from deep in the Glades to see him before he passed away.

Capt. and Mrs. Hendry had eight children who survived infancy: James E., born January 12, 1854; Louis A., born April 19, 1856; Laura I., born March 2, 1858; George M., born June 30, 1860; Francis M., born June 11, 1863; Virginia Lee, born August 20, 1866; Carrie Belle, born March 8, 1869, and Lucretia Pearl, born July 19, 1871. All the sons held public office. James E. served a term as county treasurer, Louis served six terms as mayor of Fort Myers, and George was state senator. James and George devoted most of their time to the cattle business while Louis became an attorney.

James was married to Julia Frierson June 17, 1875. They had seven children: Bard L., James E., Jr., Sarah M., Fred E., Harry F., Clarence E. and Isabella. James E., Sr. died July 10, 1915.



CAPT. AND MRS. F. A. HENDRY

Louis A. Hendry was married to Ella Frierson in 1878; Laura was married to Waddy Thompson June 22, 1873; George was married to Willie Barineau June 5, 1881; Francis M. was married to Eleanor Murdock in 1890; Virginia Lee was married to Capt. J. Fred Menge on October 30, 1884; Carrie Belle was married to Ed. L. Evans December 31, 1887, and Pearl was married to Harry Higginbotham September 6, 1888.

Captain Hendry died February 12, 1917.

Louis Hendry was accidentally shot by his nephew Fred Hendry while on a hunting trip December 31, 1928, and died almost instantly. He was survived by his widow, four sons, Paul, John, Gus and Harry and five daughters, Mrs. H. B. Mayer, Mrs. H. E. Parnell, Mrs. H. R. Knight, Mrs. Lester Wells, and Miss Anna.

#### WILLIAM MARION HENDRY

William Marion Hendry was born in Thomas County, Georgia, December 12, 1842, the fourth son of James E. and Lydia (Carlton) Hendry. With his parents he came to Hillsborough County, Florida, in 1851. During the Civil War he was a member of the Cattle Guard Battalion which tried unsuccessfully to capture Fort Myers.

With his brother, Capt. F. A. Hendry, he came to Fort Myers to live in the summer of 1873, locating at what is now First and Hendry. He rebuilt an old building on the river bank just east of Hendry Street and in 1875 erected a larger house on the same site. In the same year he opened a general store at what is now First and Hendry in partnership with Major Aaron Frierson. He was appointed on August 22, 1876, to serve as the first postmaster of "Myers," as Fort Myers was then called by the Post Office Department, and served three years.

During the panic of 1893 Mr. Hendry lost the bulk of his fortune in a phosphate mining venture. Later he served eighteen years as clerk of the circuit court. He was succeeded in that office by his son Henry A.

On December 2, 1865, he was married to Susan C. Wall, daughter of Judge J. B. Wall, of Tampa. They had seven children who survived infancy: Samuel, Edward M., Mary Susan, Henry A., William Wall, Julia A., and Lydia C. Mary Susan married Henry T. Linebaugh, May 31, 1894; Julia married R. Ingram Travers April 28, 1897; Henry A., was married to Mrs. Edna Henderson, August 6, 1899.

Following the death of his first wife, W. M. Hendry was married to Mrs. Laura Craig. He died December 23, 1914.

#### JEHU J. BLOUNT

Jehu J. Blount was born May 3, 1839, in Columbia County, Florida. He served in two wars: the Seminole uprising of the 1850's and the Civil War. During the latter conflict he saw action in a regiment commanded first by his brother, Capt. N. S. Blount and later by Capt. F. A. Hendry.

On January 16, 1862, before entering the Confederate Army, Mr. Blount was married to Mary Jane Hendry, sister of Capt. Hendry, and later the two men were associated in the cattle business in the Fort Meade area. In the fall of 1873 he moved his family to Fort Myers where Captain Hendry had settled a few months before.

Shortly after arriving in Fort Myers, Mr. Blount opened a general store and later went into partnership with H. A. Parker to form the Parker-Blount firm. He also set out a large orange grove. In company with Captain Hendry and Frank J. Wilson he promoted and built the first drainage ditch in South Florida, doing the original work on what later became known as the Three Mile Canal between Fort Thompson and Lake Okeechobee.

Mr. Blount was successful in his various undertakings until the early '90s when he became one of the backers of a company formed to dredge phosphate near Olga. More than \$100,000 was spent in machinery and equipment but the panic of 1893 forced the company to go into bankruptcy.

Mr. Blount was one of the founders of the First Methodist Church and served many years as one of its stewards. Before a regular post office was established in Fort Myers, he served as postmaster.

Mr. Blount died February 11, 1921. He was survived by his widow and five children: Mrs. Ida B. English, of Alva, Edgar J., Oscar B., Jack and Nathan. All the Blount children took active parts in Lee County affairs. The sons were particularly interested in the cattle business. Edgar served as councilman of Fort Myers and as a county commissioner.

Ida Blount was married September 22, 1886, to Charles Hyde Stebbins, of Springfield, Mass. They had one daughter, Mary Hart Stebbins, July 20, 1887. Mr. Stebbins died in 1888 and was the first person buried in the newly opened Fort Myers Cemetery.

Mrs. Stebbins was married again on January 12, 1892, to John C. English, member of a pioneer family of the Alva section. They had four children: Flora Jane, born November 20, 1892; John Colin, July 3, 1895; William Perry, December 29, 1899, and James Daniel, October 9, 1901. Mr. English died in 1944.

### FRANK B. TIPPINS

Frank B. Tippins was born October 19, 1868, in what is now DeSoto County. His mother moved to Fort Myers in 1873. When he was fifteen years old he quit school and went to work as a printer's devil for the Fort Myers Press, then just being started. Four years later his health failed and he left the Press to take a job as a cowhunter.

After riding herd for four years, Mr. Tippins regained his health and then became connected with the Seminole Indian School at Immokolee where he stayed until 1898. He then went into business for himself, opening a livery stable in Fort Myers which he operated until 1900. In that year he ran for sheriff to succeed Thomas W. Langford and was elected by a large majority.

Sheriff Tippins was re-elected time after time. In 1919 he left office to become a deputy internal revenue collector to help break up the bootlegging then prevalent on the West Coast but after one year gave up his commission and returned to fill his unexpired term as sheriff. Later he stepped out of office on account of ill health to manage a Georgia farm owned by Medford Kellum. While he was away, a lynching occurred, the only one in the history of the county. Mr. Tippins was persuaded to return and was elected sheriff again at the next election. He held the office through 1932. He later became a United States Marshal, with headquarters at Miami, and served thirteen years, retiring in 1946.

During his long service as sheriff, Tippins fired his pistol only twice. The first time was when he shot John Barnett, two-time murderer, in the leg at Marco to capture him after he had broken jail. The second time was when he killed a Negro while fighting with him in a dark room. He arrested many desperate criminals during his career and acquired a statewide reputation for fearlessness.

On Tuesday, February 28, 1907, Sheriff Tippins supervised the hanging of the only person ever executed in Lee County—Jasper N. Edwards, of Georgia, who had been convicted July 31, 1906, of the murder of Robert Carson following a quarrel over a woman. Edwards, a stranger, had no friends in Fort Myers; the murdered man had many. The trial of Edwards was a tragic farce; it lasted only a few hours. Sheriff Tippins said later that the hanging of the condemned man was the most distressing duty he ever was compelled to perform. The execution took place in the jail yard in the full view of the public.

One crime occurred on the fringe of Lee County which Sheriff Tippins was unable to solve—the killing of Ed Watson at Chokoloskee, in the Ten Thousand Islands,

on Monday, October 24, 1910. Thirty-three bullets were found in Watson's body. Due to the fact that Watson was said to have earlier killed the notorious Belle Starr and had been suspected of killing many of his employes, to escape paying them their wages, his murder attracted national attention and stories about him are still being printed, four decades later.

On February 13, 1901, Mr. Tippins married Fannie Yates. They had two sons, Walter Yates and Frank B., Jr. Mr. Tippins died in Miami November 15, 1948.

### MAJOR AARON FRIERSON

Major Aaron Frierson was born December 3, 1806, in Sumter County, South Carolina. He attained the rank of major while serving in the Confederate Army during the Civil War.

In 1874, Major Frierson came to Fort Myers with his second wife, the former Mary Wall, daughter of Judge and Mrs. P. G. Wall, of Tampa, and their three children, Taylor, Ella and Julia. With W. M. Hendry he established a general store at First and Hendry.

In 1875 Major Frierson purchased a two-acre tract at First and Jackson from Major James Evans for \$450. On this site he erected a substantial two-story home which stood for many years. (See General Text.) Mrs. Frierson developed one of the most beautiful gardens in the town.

Taylor Frierson for years operated the Frierson House, located in the family home to which an eight-room addition was made in 1887. He also had extensive grove holdings and with James E. Hendry, Sr., owned large herds of cattle and pastures at Fort Thompson. He was married in 1877 to Anna Dagenhardt, of Tampa. He died May 23, 1925, and was survived by three sons: H. T., J. E., and P. G., and two daughters, Mrs. O. M. Sciple and Mrs. Ruth McGinn.

Julia Frierson was married to James E. Hendry, son of Capt. and Mrs. F. A. Hendry, on June 17, 1875. Her sister Ella was married to Louis A. Hendry, oldest son of Capt. and Mrs. Hendry, in 1878.

Major Frierson died June 20, 1887. His wife lived until July 25, 1905.

### JAMES E. HENDRY, JR.

James E. Hendry, Jr., was born July 11, 1878, in Fort Myers, the son of James E. and Julia I. (Frierson) Hendry. He is a grandson of Capt. F. A. Hendry.

After attending the public school in Fort Myers, Mr. Hendry enrolled at the Florida Conference College, in Leesburg, from

which he was graduated in 1898. He then studied at Massey's Business College, in Jacksonville, specializing in business administration and shorthand and typewriting. After graduating, he was appointed court reporter in Lee County but quit after recording one case.

During the next few years Mr. Hendry worked in Fort Myers stores and helped his father in his cattle business. When the Bank of Fort Myers was organized in 1906, he was named assistant cashier.

Always interested in horticulture, Mr. Hendry in 1908 started a nursery, making a speciality of semi-tropical shrubs and palms. This nursery was developed during the years which followed into the Everglades Nursery of today, one of the largest of its kind in the world, growing more palms than any other in the United States. Mr. Hendry, who has headed the nursery since it was started, now has thirty-five acres planted and seven under shelter. Hundreds of thousands of plants, shrubs and palms are sold annually.

Retiring from the bank in 1914, Mr. Hendry spent part of his time at his nursery and part helping his father in the cattle business. During the boom of the 1920's, he was engaged in real estate activities. When the boom ended he concentrated on his nursery, enlarging it year by year.

Mr. Hendry played an important role in the coming of the Seaboard railroad into Fort Myers. S. Davies Warfield, president of the railroad, engaged him in 1925 to acquire all the property needed for a right-of-way into the city and to serve as his personal advisor. Working quietly, without letting anyone know he was buying land for the railroad, Mr. Hendry finally obtained all the property required and the entrance of the road into the city was made possible.

Mr. Hendry has been credited with having helped to a great degree in making Fort Myers the "City of Palms." Because of his insistence that the city should make provision for taking care of the royal palms donated by Thomas A. Edison, he was appointed on June 11, 1915, to serve on the city's first park board and during the next two years many streets were planted with palms. He also served as chairman of the park board during the early Twenties and furnished royal palms at cost when the Rotary Club sponsored a movement to beautify McGregor Boulevard beyond the city limits. And on September 16, 1928, after retiring from the park board, he was awarded a contract by the city to plant 6,954 trees for \$28,000, the plantings to extend 37 miles on 67 streets. It was the largest street beautification program ever undertaken by any city in southwest Florida.

Mr. Hendry was a director of the Bank of Fort Myers for many years and president



JAMES E. HENDRY, JR.

of the Gulf Holding Company. He was a charter member of the Rotary Club and is a member of the Methodist Church.

On June 25, 1907, Mr. Hendry was married to Florence J. Stout, daughter of Frank H. and Olive Stout, born in Holton, Kansas. They have two children: James E., III, born February 15, 1909, Barbara, born February 11, 1911. On June 22, 1941, James E., III, was married to Elizabeth Wilkinson. They have two daughters, Susan Sharp, born January 16, 1946, and Margaret Elizabeth, born August 25, 1948. Barbara Hendry was married to Robert H. Linderman May 18, 1946.

#### JACOB DAUGHTREY

Jacob Daughtrey was born in Chattanooga, Tenn., in 1842. He came to Florida when a young man and on October 20, 1864, was married to Emma Youmans in the small settlement of Miami. Coming to the West Coast with his family in 1878, he homesteaded on the north side of the river, planting a grove and raising cattle. He also planted a tract of sugar cane and built a mill in which he manufactured syrup.

Mr. Daugherty died suddenly on November 11, 1885, near Blount's store in Fort Myers.

He was survived by his widow and seven children: Martha Elizabeth, Lucema J., Mary M., James H., Jacob Grant, Arthur Garfield, and Amanda F.

### DR. THOMAS E. LANGFORD

Dr. Thomas E. Langford was born in Madison County, Florida, in 1847. He received his early education in Madison, attended medical college, and practiced several years in Ellaville. In 1869 he married Annie Jane Galloway at Live Oak, Fla. Shortly afterward he gave up the medical profession and entered the cattle business, becoming one of the leading cattlemen of the state.

In the fall of 1878 Dr. Langford came to Fort Myers and became associated with James E. Hendry, Sr. The two men bought out the Summerlin interests at Punta Rassa and the schooners "Lily White" and "Wave" and became active in buying and shipping beef cattle to Key West. They also were extensively engaged in stock raising. The breaking out of the Spanish-American War opened the Cuban markets to them and they shipped thousands of head annually.

Dr. Langford died at Bartow January 21, 1900, and his body was brought to Fort Myers for burial. He was survived by his widow and five children: Walter G., Mrs. Stella Voris, James, Homie and Eunice.

Dr. Langford's brother Taff O. Langford accompanied him to Fort Myers and was engaged for many years in the saloon business. In 1911 he erected the two-story brick building on First, a little west of Jackson, known in 1948 as the Miller Building. Two

other brothers, Nicholas W. and Joseph, came later and also a cousin, Thomas W. Langford. When Lee County was created Nicholas became tax collector and Thomas sheriff.

### WALTER G. LANGFORD

Walter G. Langford was born in Live Oak, Fla., July 2, 1873, the son of Dr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Langford. When a young man he became associated with John M. Roach, president of the Chicago Traction Company, who had purchased Useppa Island. The two men developed Deep Lake, an extensive citrus grove deep in the Glades about thirteen miles north of the present town of Everglades. They also constructed a railroad from the grove to tidewater.

Mr. Langford played an important part in inducing officials of the Atlantic Coast Line railroad to extend their tracks into Fort Myers. He also persuaded many wealthy northerners to buy properties in South Florida and he was credited with having brought more outside money into this area than any other man in Fort Myers.

In 1907 Mr. Langford organized the First National Bank and served as its president until the time of his death. While he was head of the bank the present bank building at First and Hendry was constructed.

On July 27, 1898, Mr. Langford was married to Miss Carrie Watson.

Mr. Langford died November 15, 1920. He was survived by his widow and two daughters, Beuna and Fay; two sisters, Mrs. Stella Wain and Mrs. Charles Harrington; a brother, Homie Langford, and a grandson, Walter Langford Ballard. Fay is now the wife of Robert T. Paul and lives in New York City.

### CHARLES A. POWELL, SR.

Charles A. Powell, Sr., was born in Fort Myers June 20, 1880, the son of William F. and Rhoda (Galloway) Powell.

William F. Powell, a native of South Carolina, came to Fort Myers in the late 1870's and was associated for many years with Taff O. Langford in business and in cattle raising. "Captain Bill," as he was known to everyone in town, was one of the incorporators of Fort Myers in 1885 and was active in civic affairs until his death in 1913.

Charles A. Powell was educated in Fort Myers schools and at Stetson University. After leaving the university he engaged in the fish business for a number of years and then started working for the Seminole Power & Ice Company as an engineer. He remained with the concern after it was purchased by



WALTER G. LANGFORD

Southern Utilities and in 1925 by the Florida Power & Light Company, serving as plant superintendent.

Mr. Powell died July 22, 1939. He was survived by his widow, Mrs. Mary Gilliam Powell; a daughter, Mrs. Mary Kelly; a son, Charles A. Powell, Jr., and three sisters, Mrs. Annie Dean, Mrs. Kate Hopson and Mrs. R. E. Robinson.

### CAPT. J. FRED MENGE

Capt. J. Fred Menge was born September 10, 1858, forty miles below New Orleans on the Mississippi, the son of Antone and Catherine (Conrad) Menge. Becoming a drainage expert, he was employed by Hamilton Disston in 1881 to assist in the reclamation of the Everglades and arrived in Fort Myers in September, 1881, with a dredge built at Cedar Keys. For the next seven years he was engaged in dredging canals leading from Lake Okeechobee, the principal one being the canal from the head of the Caloosahatchee to the lake.

When Disston suspended drainage operations in 1888, Captain Menge purchased two small boats from the Disston company and began providing transportation service up the river. Later he formed the Menge Brothers Steamboat Line with his brother, Capt. Conrad Menge, and purchased larger and better boats for the up-river run. The line was an important factor in the development of the Caloosahatchee region. (See Index: Menge Brothers Steamboat Line.)

The Menge brothers continued to operate their river steamers until the development of highways and the advent of trucks dealt water transportation a fatal blow. They suspended operations just before World War I. Fred Menge then joined the Coast Line railroad as a commercial agent and Conrad later was employed by Henry Ford, with whom he had become friendly, and moved to Dearborn, Mich.

On October 30, 1884, Capt. Fred Menge was married to Virginia Lee Hendry, daughter of Capt. and Mrs. F. A. Hendry. They had six children: Laura Belle, born January 10, 1887, who married John D. Clark; Kathleen, born February 5, 1889, who married C. C. Pursley; Nettie P., born February 26, 1892, who married Robert Battey; Frederick A., born March 23, 1894; Charles Dean, born August 23, 1898, and Virginia Lee, March 9, 1903, who married Howard Denham.

Captain Menge died January 28, 1937.

Conrad Menge was married to Sallie Shands, daughter of Joseph F. Shands. They have three children: Conrad C., Wilmer J., and Sidney.

### RHEINHOLD KINZIE

Rheinhold Kinzie was born in Eulau, Germany, on February 3, 1850. After serving in the Franco-Prussian War he was married to Ernestine Betterman. They had three sons: George F., born December 29, 1874; Andrew L., born November 15, 1875, and Eric W., born May 31, 1877.

Believing there were greater opportunities in the New World than in Germany, Mr. Kinzie in 1879 went to Cuba, intending to go into the bee business. Not liking it in Cuba, he came to the Fort Myers district and homesteaded near Olga. While working on his property he became ill. When Mrs. Kinzie learned of his illness she left Germany with her three sons and came to America. They arrived in Fort Myers April 11, 1887.

Mr. Kinzie died on July 27, 1887, and shortly afterward Mrs. Kinzie brought the family to Fort Myers, settled on Jackson Street next to the school grounds. She had little money but a strong determination to make the family self-supporting, and she succeeded. Her sons became outstanding citizens of Fort Myers. Mrs. Kinzie died June 2, 1909.

### DONALD BAIN

Donald Bain was born November 19, 1862, in Inverness, Scotland, the son of Donald and Margaret (MacGregor) Bain. He was educated in Scotland and when seventeen years old came to the United States and studied for two years at an agricultural college in Baltimore.

Coming to Fort Myers in 1882, Mr. Bain settled on the Caloosahatchee about five miles north of Punta Rassa. He was joined in 1884 by his brother John. Other settlers came in soon afterward and Donald Bain named the small community "Iona" after the Ionian Islands off Scotland. The section has been known as Iona ever since.

Both Donald and John Bain became successful vegetable growers.

On July 22, 1919, Donald Bain was married to Emma Harris, of LaCrosse, Fla. They had one daughter, Janet, who was married to Lucian F. Thomas on February 16, 1939. Mr. Bain died in Fort Myers February 6, 1945, and was survived by his widow and daughter.

### THADDEUS M. PARK

Thaddeus M. Park was born September 16, 1854, in Beuna Vista, near Americus, Ga., the son of Dr. and Mrs. Josiah Andrew Park. Early in life he learned to be a builder and when he came to Fort Myers in 1883 he soon became the leading contractor in the community. He also established the first well-equipped saw mill in town.

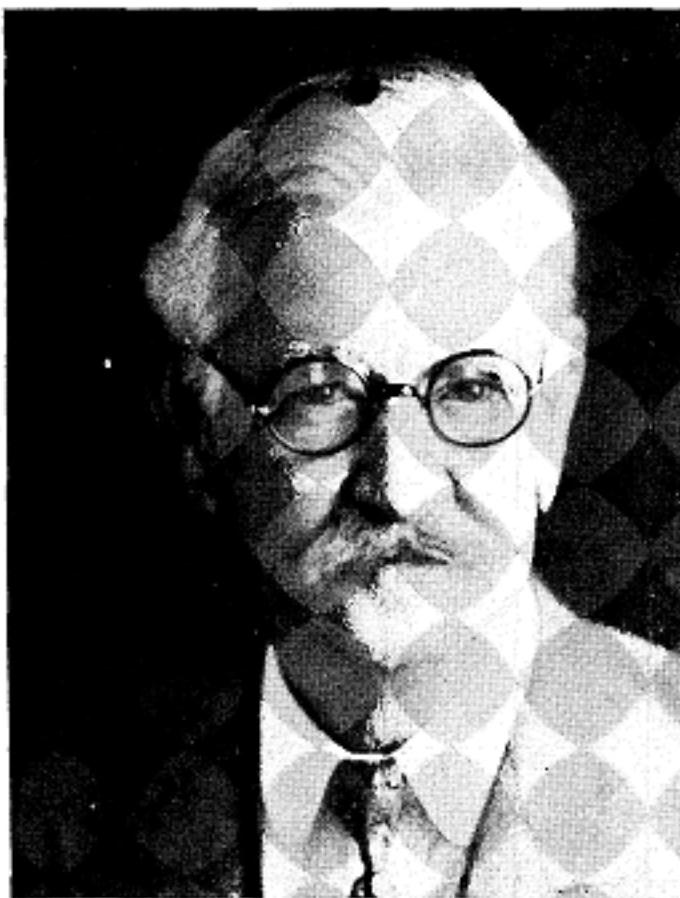
Included among the many buildings constructed by Mr. Park were the county courthouse, erected in 1894, the first modern livery stable, and many residences and commercial buildings. He also was a citrus grower and owned large groves at Tice and in Fort Myers. Park Avenue, named in his honor, adjoined his Fort Myers grove and home.

Mr. Park was the first to vote in the election held in 1885 to determine whether Fort Myers should be incorporated as a town. He later served as councilman six years and also served several terms as a member of the school board.

On January 7, 1884, he was married to Lula S. Frierson, daughter of Samuel Frierson, son of Major Aaron Frierson. They had four children: Mrs. Neva Park Watson, deceased; Addie, who became Mrs. Ben P. King; Julia, and Mary Louise, deceased. Mr. Park died March 28, 1900. Three grandchildren were living in 1948: Sara King, wife of Ellis Rasmussen; Kathleen Watson, wife of Coley Westbrook, Jr. and Edward D. Watson.

Mrs. Park took a keen interest in community affairs and for many years took an active part in movements aimed at improving the town. She died April 18, 1944.

In 1922 Miss Julia Park joined with Miss Alta L. Evans in establishing the ladies ready-to-wear firm of Evans & Park, one of the leading firms of its kind in southwest Florida.



EDWARD LEWIS EVANS

### EDWARD LEWIS EVANS

Edward Lewis Evans was born in New Orleans May 1, 1858, the son of Edward and Eliza (Lewis) Evans, natives of Ireland. He was educated in New Orleans and when twenty-five years old came to Fort Myers on a coastwise steamer and got a job as manager of H. L. Roan's. When Thomas A. Edison came to Fort Myers on a sightseeing trip in 1885 he stopped in at Roan's store to ask about fishing and Mr. Evans helped induce him to make Fort Myers his winter home. They later became close friends.

An ardent fisherman, Mr. Evans was one of the first to see the possibilities of tarpon fishing as a tourist sport. He designed tackle for leading fishing tackle manufacturers and many items were named after him. Included among his sportsmen friends were such celebrities as Zane Grey, Rex Beach, Fred Stone and E. A. Pike.

After several years in Roan's store, Mr. Evans and Harvie E. Heitman formed a partnership and started the Heitman-Evans Company which was managed by Mr. Evans for many years.

Mr. Evans took a leading part in the incorporation of Fort Myers as a town in 1885 and also in the creation of Lee County two years later. He served several terms as town councilman and one term as mayor. For six years he was a member of the county board of public instruction. During the administration of Grover Cleveland he was postmaster of Fort Myers. For many years he was chairman of the Democratic committee of Florida.

In 1930 the American Legion named him the outstanding citizen of the year because of his long service to the community.

Late in the 1890's Mr. Evans built a home on Riverside Avenue (now McGregor Boulevard) which became one of the show places of the town. He lived there until 1921 when he built a home in Dean Park. He then sold his first home to the city for \$34,000 and the city offices were moved there. The Evans home was still serving as City Hall in 1948. Evans Park, adjoining the city building, was named in his honor.

On December 31, 1887, Mr. Evans was married to Belle Hendry, daughter of Capt. and Mrs. F. A. Hendry. They had a daughter, Rossie, who became the wife of Frank C. Alderman, and a son, Edward H.

Mr. Evans died April 2, 1934. He was survived by his widow, his two children, a brother, T. J. Evans, and a sister, Mrs. C. E. Everett.

### CHARLTON TAYLOR TOOKE

Charlton Taylor Tooke was born October 14, 1860, on a farm in Jefferson County, Georgia, the son of James Thomas and Amazon (Himes) Tooke. His father, a plantation owner, was impoverished during the Civil War and young Tooke had few opportunities to gain a formal education. When twelve years old he started working as a farm hand and seven years later came to Florida and got a job as a cowhunter.

Mr. Tooke first saw the Caloosahatchee in the spring of 1880 when he and Irvin Singletary drove a herd of cattle from Fort Meade to Punta Rassa. More than a week was required to make the journey.

By the fall of 1883 Mr. Tooke had saved enough money to go into business so he came to Fort Myers and opened a saloon. His establishment was patronized mostly by cowhunters who bought most of their drinks on credit. By the fall of 1884 he had so much money on his books and so little in his cash box that he decided to change occupations. So he went to work as a cattle buyer for Dr. T. E. Langford, then one of the leading cattlemen in South Florida. For two years he lived in Arcadia and during that period served as sheriff of De Soto county.

Preferring to live near the Gulf, Mr. Tooke in 1887 left Dr. Langford and started working as a carpenter-contractor in Fort Myers. A little later he set out a 20-acre orange grove on the north side of the Caloosahatchee and also managed a 32-acre grove on the Orange River. Shortly after the turn of the century he gave up the building business and devoted all his time to his grove interests.

Deeply religious, Mr. Tooke for nearly twenty years preached all over South Florida as an unordained, undenominational minister in Baptist and Methodist churches.

In 1896, Mr. Tooke was elected county commissioner and he served four years. For his services, he was paid \$52 a year plus \$2 a day when the county roads were "worked" twice a year.

On October 1, 1884, Mr. Tooke was married to Lavenia Gonzalez, daughter of Manuel A. and Evalina J. Gonzalez.

Mr. and Mrs. Tooke had ten children: a boy, born August 5, 1885, died October 3, 1885; Seth T., born September 24, 1886; Barney F., February 7, 1890; Charlton T., Jr., July 9, 1891; James E., June 8, 1893; Evelyn J., March 2, 1895; John Judson, August 1 1898; Carrabelle, December 25, 1900; Grace Mildred, May 17, 1904, and Addie, February 17, 1906.



CHARLTON TAYLOR TOOKE

Seth Tooke was married to Violet Morgan, December 24, 1912; Barney to Olive L. Curry, August 12, 1919; Carlton to Irene Morris, May 12, 1922; Evelyn to J. C. McDevitt, June 29, 1922; Grace Mildred to Charles S. Waugh, May 21, 1927; James E. Tooke to Floy C. Roberts, September 21, 1927, and Carrabelle Tooke to Jack B. Rice, March 24, 1935.

Mrs. Tooke died November 13, 1934, one month and three days before her sixtieth birthday. Mr. Tooke died Sunday, October 17, 1948.

### THE HANSON FAMILY

Dr. William Hanson was born in Felstead, Essex, England, on October 6, 1842. He studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh where he became a fellow in the colleges of physicians and surgeons. Coming to America in 1881 he lived a short time at Key West and in 1884 came to Fort Myers where he practiced medicine and operated in real estate, opening one of the town's first subdivisions.

Dr. Hanson died December 15, 1911, and was survived by his widow, Mrs. Julia Hanson, and three sons, Bernard, Newton and W. Stanley. Newton died six days later.

Mrs. Hanson was widely known as the mother of women's organizations in Fort Myers. She was one of the founders of

the Woman's Club and served as its president for many years. She also was one of the organizers of the W.C.T.U., the Friday Musicale, the Palmetto Society, the Cemetery Improvement Association, the Needlework Guild, the Lee Memorial Hospital Association, and many other organizations.

She was a deputy commissioner of the Florida Fish and Game Association and was recognized by the United States Audubon Society as a writer and artist on the subject of bird life. She aided in the passage of many laws for the protection of bird life and care of the Seminoles.

Mrs. Hanson died November 29, 1934.

W. Stanley Hanson, one of her surviving sons, was born in Key West November 27, 1883. He attended Fort Myers schools and his early jobs included work at the post office and Royal Palm Hotel. Later he was active in real estate and for many years wrote special articles for newspapers and magazines.

Mr. Hanson was best known for his work among the Seminole Indians who trusted him implicitly. He was in reality their "white medicine man," helping them when they were ill, settling their tribal disputes and solving many of the problems which arose out of their contacts with the whites. He spoke the Seminole language fluently and became recognized as the foremost authority in the country on the Seminole tribes.



W. STANLEY HANSON

Throughout his life Mr. Hanson was one of the most active advocates of good roads and improved waterways in the entire state. He served as guide for many explorations into the Glades country, which he knew thoroughly, and was one of the Trail Blazers who first crossed the Tamiami Trail in 1923. He was the third president of the Blazers organization.

Mr. Hanson took an active part in political and fraternal work. He was elected city tax collector in 1910 and later served three terms as city councilman. He was a charter member of the Elks Lodge.

In 1912 he was married to Clara Petzold of Tarpon Springs.

Mr. Hanson died April 4, 1945. He was survived by his widow, a son, W. Stanley, Jr., and a daughter, Mrs. Marian McGee.

### THOMAS JAMES EVANS

Thomas James Evans was born March 17, 1864, in New Orleans, the son of Edward and Eliza (Lewis) Evans. He was educated in New Orleans schools. In 1884 he came to Fort Myers to join his brother, Edward L., who had arrived the year before and was engaged in business.

Mr. Evans was associated with his brother in varied activities for many years and shortly after the turn of the century became the Fort Myers distributor for the Standard Oil Company.

He was a member of Tropical Lodge No. 56, F.&A.M., the Elks Lodge, and the Episcopal Church. He took an active interest in community affairs and was one of the men who voted for the incorporation of the town in 1885.

On January 2, 1889, Mr. Evans was married to Eliza K. Hibble, of Albion, Ill. They had two children: Alta L. and Ellen M., now the wife Harry C. Stucky. Mr. Evans died February 16, 1936.

Miss Alta L. Evans in 1922 joined with Miss Julia Park to form the firm of Evans & Park, one of the leading business establishments in Fort Myers.

### WILLIAM H. TOWLES

William H. Towles was born in Perry, Fla., September 28, 1852. When a young man he entered the cattle business, buying and selling cattle. He later established a general store in Bartow. In 1884 he came to Fort Myers and built a home on Riverside Avenue (now McGregor Boulevard.) He later built a larger home at Second and Fowler which was for years one of the show places of the town.

Soon after coming to Fort Myers Mr. Towles entered the mercantile business with James E. Hendry, Sr., opening the Towles & Hendry general store at First and Jackson. In 1885 the firm engaged Joseph Vivas to build a wharf at the foot of Jackson, the second largest dock on the river. Three years later the firm was dissolved and Mr. Towles thereafter devoted most of his time to the cattle business, becoming one of the leading cattlemen of the state. During the Spanish-American War he shipped thousands of head to Cuba and was reported to have made a fortune.

Mr. Towles played a leading part in the creation of Lee County and was elected to serve as one of the first county commissioners. The second floor of Towles & Hendry store was rented by the county at \$250 a year to serve as the first "courthouse." At that time Mr. Towles was a leader in the movement to get a fine courthouse for the county—he did not succeed until 1914 when he defied opposition and made a new building essential by having the first regular courthouse demolished. (See Chapter VI.)

For many years Mr. Towles was a member of the town council and took a most active part in community affairs. (See Index: Towles, William H.)

He was married twice. After the death of his first wife, he married Miss Willie Boyd. He died June 25, 1921, and was survived by his widow and three children: Mrs. Corrine T. Summerlin, Wallace, and Mildred.

#### CARL F. ROBERTS

Carl Frithiof Roberts was born in Stockholm Sweden, June 25, 1862. In 1879 he came to America and settled in Illinois. When 21 years old, Mr. Roberts and eleven other adventurous youths from the vicinity of Rock Island, Ill., went down the Mississippi on a cotton barge to New Orleans. There he heard fascinating stories about Florida so he took a steamer to the then thriving cattle port of Punta Rassa and went in a sloop up the river to Fort Myers, arriving January 15, 1884.

A carpenter by trade, Mr. Roberts worked a short time in Fort Myers and then went adventuring down the coast. In Key West he was stricken with yellow fever and went back home in Illinois to recuperate. But within six months he was back in Fort Myers which he helped turn from a frontier town to a modern, progressive city.

Becoming a contractor, Mr. Roberts erected many houses and store buildings



WILLIAM H. TOWLES

during the years which followed. Two of the first houses he built were for Peter O. Knight and Major James Evans. In those days, lumber was shipped to Fort Myers by schooner from Pensacola and Apalachicola. At first, Mr. Roberts bought only as much as he could use during the year. Then he began buying entire schooner loads and re-selling to others.

In the late 90's Mr. Roberts decided to go into the undertaking business and established the first funeral home in Fort Myers, at Hendry and Oak (now Main), which he operated in conjunction with his lumber business.

On Friday, October 16, 1903, Mr. Roberts' establishment was destroyed by fire. He then opened a lumber shed on the Hendry Street dock. After the Coast Line came in, he moved back along the tracks into greatly enlarged quarters and dealt in all kinds of building materials. In 1909 he organized the Carl F. Roberts Company and in 1921 the Seminole Lumber and Manufacturing Company. He also invested heavily in real estate, acquiring many residential and business properties.

Mr. Roberts was one of the organizers and first treasurer of the first Fort Myers Board of Trade and was active in the organization for many years. He also helped to organize

the first volunteer fire department. His home was one of the first in the town to be wired for electricity and to have telephone service.

Mr. Roberts was a trustee of the Board of Education of Lee County for several terms and also served as treasurer of the Lee Memorial Hospital Board. For a number of years he was active in the Fort Myers Cemetery Association and was instrumental in replatting and beautifying the cemetery. He was a member of Tropical Lodge No. 56, F.&A.M.; Egypt Temple, Shrine, Tampa; Royal Palm Lodge No. 16, Knights of Pythias, and the Kiwanis Club.

On July 12, 1901, Mr. Roberts was married to Emma Christina Frick, who was born in Skofde, Sweden. They had two children: Esther Christina, born March 1, 1903, who died January 2, 1934, and Carl Rudolph, born February 12, 1906.

Mr. Roberts died July 25, 1937. He was survived by his widow, his son, and a sister, Mrs. G. F. Widerquist.

Carl Rudolph Roberts was graduated from Fort Myers High School and then entered business with his father in the Seminole Lumber and Manufacturing Company. He served three and one-half years in the armed forces during World War II. On July 14, 1944, he was married to Miss Lora Fraser.



CARL F. ROBERTS

### THE JEFFCOTT BROTHERS

Three Irish brothers named Jeffcott—Robert, John C. and William—came to Florida from Tralee, Ireland, in 1883 with the intention of establishing a family estate and growing oranges.

Arriving eventually at Sarasota, the brothers acquired a half mile of waterfront north of Phillippi Creek and started planting a grove. After several hundred trees were in the ground, Robert wandered down the coast to look over South Florida. William also had the wanderlust and moved on to New Orleans. John remained at Sarasota to care for the grove.

In Fort Myers, Robert learned that C. W. (Waddy) Thompson was getting ready to build a new home on First Street. A carpenter by trade, he sought the contract—and got it. By the time he completed the job he found he liked Fort Myers so well that he decided to live here permanently. He became one of the town's leading contractors during the years which followed.

Shortly after arriving here, Robert was offered two 40-acre tracts just south of the town limits for \$100 cash. He wrote a letter to William, then in Chicago, and told him about the bargain. The two men then bought the tracts. Soon afterward, William arrived to look over Fort Myers—and went into the interior decorating business. About the same time John came down from Sarasota and also became an interior decorator.

The Jeffcott brothers later acquired much additional property in Fort Myers and opened several of the town's first subdivisions. Their tracts now are almost in the heart of the city.

John Jeffcott was noted for his wit and was often called upon to speak at public functions. He served on the town council and during the 90's was elected mayor. Shortly after the turn of the century he went to New York where he died December 2, 1908 at the age of 58. He was survived by his widow, the former Mary Agnes Kehoe, and two daughters, Katherine and Alicia.

William Jeffcott, who was born in 1856, was never married. He died in Fort Myers May 26, 1939.

Robert Jeffcott was born on March 21, 1846. He was married in 1885 to Deliah Ann Martin, born in Brooksville, Fla., January 4, 1852. They had seven children: Robert, now deceased; William, in 1948 a lieutenant of the Fort Myers police force; Thomas, deceased; Katherine L., now owner of the Jeffcott Realty Co.; Mrs. Stella J. Karnbach, Jackson Heights, L. I., N. Y., and Lena, now deceased. Mr. Jeffcott died February 16, 1916, and Mrs. Jeffcott, May 15, 1928.

### KATHERINE L. JEFFCOTT

Katherine L. Jeffcott was born in Sarasota, October 26, 1891, the daughter of Robert and Deliah (Martin) Jeffcott. She attended Fort Myers schools and was graduated from high school in 1910. Soon afterward she started teaching in the elementary grades.

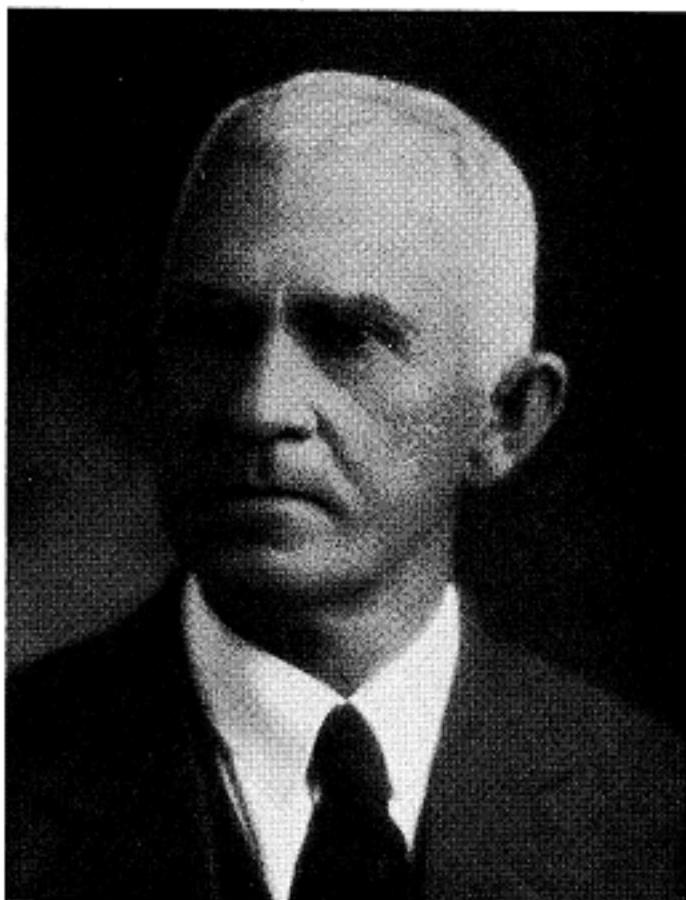
Desiring to continue her education, Miss Jeffcott later took courses at the University of Georgia, in Athens; Peabody College, in Nashville, Tenn., and the University of California, in Berkeley. From 1916 to 1924 she was principal of Gwynne Institute.

Entering the real estate business when the boom was getting under way, Miss Jeffcott, known locally as "Miss Kate," established in 1924 the Jeffcott Realty Company which she still operates, the concern now being one of the largest in southwest Florida. In 1948 Miss Jeffcott and her associates were developing South Florida Farm Homesites, 10-acre tracts on the Pine Island Road, and Palmwood Subdivision in the North Tamiami Trail section.

Miss Jeffcott is a member of the First Methodist Church, Business and Professional Women's Club, Woman's Community Club, Executives Club, Chamber of Commerce and the Fort Myers Association of Insurance Agents.



KATHERINE L. JEFFCOTT



ROBERT ABNER HENDERSON, SR.

### ROBERT A. HENDERSON, SR.

Robert Abner Henderson, Sr., was born in Madison, Fla., February 11, 1866, the son of Jasper MacDonald and Georgia (Church) Henderson. In 1877 he went to Cochrane, Ga., where he worked in stores until January, 1885, when he came to Fort Myers and got a job as a clerk in Towles & Hendry general store.

In 1887, Mr. Henderson started a store of his own at the corner of Jackson and First. Within a few years his store became one of the leading general stores in South Florida. Citrus fruit often was taken as payment for groceries, fertilizer and feed and he also traded supplies for alligator hides, furs, and plumes. The rear of his store often was filled with hides and furs being held for shipment.

In 1891 Mr. Henderson bought a schooner and operated it between Fort Myers and Mobile, Ala. Later he went into the citrus grove and cattle business on a big scale, dividing his time between his ranch, groves and the store. He was one of the leaders in the movement to improve the strain of Florida cattle and brought in the first earload of pure bred bulls. He also built the first cattle dipping vat in the county.

Mr. Henderson served as the town banker for nearly a decade, keeping people's money in a large steel safe in his store. He helped to organize the Bank of Fort Myers and for many years served as one of the directors.

He also was one of the organizers and officials of the Citizens Bank of Fort Myers and when the institution was forced to close because of the defalcation of the cashier, he led a movement to pay the depositors in full, at a cost to himself of over \$30,000.

In 1892 Mr. Henderson was elected county treasurer and he held the office for twenty-two consecutive years. During most of this same period he also served as town and city councilman. In 1914 he was elected state representative and was instrumental in passing a bill to discontinue the office of county treasurer. In 1922 he was again elected to the state legislature, this time on a county division platform, and he introduced and secured the adoption of the bill creating Collier and Hendry counties.

On October 22, 1891, Mr. Henderson was married to Mamie A. Wilson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Francis J. Wilson, a pioneer Fort Myers family. Mr. and Mrs. Henderson had two sons, Robert A. Henderson, Jr., and Frank J. Henderson.

Mr. Henderson died December 28, 1930, and Mrs. Henderson on January 15, 1935.

#### ROBERT A. HENDERSON, JR.

Robert Abner Henderson, Jr., was born in Fort Myers October 12, 1892, the son of Robert Abner and Mamie (Wilson) Henderson. He received his early education in Fort Myers schools and in 1909 entered



ROBERT A. HENDERSON, JR.

Emory College, then at Oxford, Ga., where he took a course in literature. In the fall of 1912 he enrolled at the University of Florida from which he was graduated with an LL.B. degree in 1914. At Emory, he became a member of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity and at the university he was editor of the year book in 1914, active in the glee club, and president of the John Marshall Debating Society and also of his class.

After his graduation, Mr. Henderson entered the office of M. H. Long, in Jacksonville, where he remained six months. He then entered the office of E. J. L'Engle, also of Jacksonville, known as the dean of Florida lawyers, where he remained twelve months. In January, 1916, he returned to Fort Myers and opened his own office. A year later he formed a partnership with Frank C. Alderman which was dissolved in 1918. He then practiced alone until August, 1924, when he formed a partnership with J. A. Franklin, who came to Fort Myers from Jacksonville. In 1926 the firm took in W. McL. Christie who remained a partner until 1928 when he went to Jacksonville. In January, 1944, F. E. Starnes and Parker Holt became members of the firm, thereafter known as Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt.

In December, 1922, Mr. Henderson became counsel for the Collier interests.

In 1923, Mr. Henderson took a leading part in organizing the Caloosahatchee River Bridge Company and secured an exclusive 20-year franchise from the county to build and maintain the bridge. When the bridge was almost completed, it was taken over by the county without profit to the builders. (See Index—Caloosahatchee Bridge.)

Mr. Henderson in 1948 was president of the Florida Holding Company, vice-president and general counsel of the Inter-County Telephone & Telegraph Company, chairman of the board and counsel of the Lee County Bank and division counsel of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. In 1925 he was a co-organizer of the Fort Myers Building & Loan Company and served as its president until it was dissolved, at which time he helped organize the First Federal Savings & Loan Company and was one of its directors until 1947.

For many years Mr. Henderson was a director of the Chamber of Commerce and served as its president in 1925, 1926 and 1927. During that period he helped bring in the Seaboard Railroad. He is a charter member of the Rotary Club and a member of the First Methodist Church, B.P.O.E., the Lee County, Volusia County, American and Florida bar associations, and has for years been one of the Florida representatives on National Conference Commissioners on Uniform Laws.

As an avocation, he is a breeder of pure bred registered Brahman cattle and spends much of his spare time on his ranch.

On July 17, 1917, Mr. Henderson was married to Lucy Holmes who died July 19, 1919. On October 16, 1938, he was married again to Jennie Starnes. He has one son, R. A. Henderson, III, born August 31, 1918.

### FRANK H. STOUT

Frank H. Stout was born in Kalamazoo, Mich., August 22, 1838. A newspaperman all his life, he moved to Wisconsin when a young man and on July 2, 1869, was married to Olive E. Gardner at Stevens Point. In 1871, he moved to Netawaka, Kansas, where he started the Netawaka Herald. A year later he moved to Holton, Kansas, where he was associate publisher of the Holton Recorder until 1885.

Leaving Kansas because of ill health, Mr. Stout came to Florida and worked for a few months on the Agriculturist, published in DeLand. Mr. and Mrs. Stout then heard that the Fort Myers Press was for sale and Mrs. Stout came and purchased the plant from Mrs. S. C. Cleveland, wife of the founding editor who had died.

Mr. Stout took charge of the Press in May, 1886, and continued as editor and publisher until 1896 when he sold it to J. D. Rose. The next year he took the paper back and it remained his property until the time of his death, December 7, 1911. He was survived by his widow and three children: Nathan G., Mrs. James E. Hendry, Jr., and Mrs. W. M. White.

Mrs. Stout assisted her husband with the paper from the beginning and was always active in community affairs. She took a leading part in founding the Woman's Club and the first Library Association. She served twice as postmistress of Fort Myers, first from August 2, 1889, to September 21, 1893, and second from August 22, 1897, to January 18, 1906. She was one of the founders of the Lee Memorial Hospital and also took an active interest in school and church work.

Mrs. Stout died September 23, 1930.

### NATHAN G. STOUT

Nathan Gardner Stout was born July 25, 1874, in Holton, Kansas, the son of Frank Henry and Olive Elizabeth (Gardner) Stout. He came to Fort Myers in May, 1886, when his parents purchased the Fort Myers Press.

Mr. Stout was associated with the Press, from printer's devil to owner and publisher, from 1886 to 1914 when the paper was sold



NATHAN G. STOUT

to T. M. Callahan, of Superior, Wis. During this period he served as town clerk and treasurer and city tax assessor. He also served one term as a trustee of the school board.

In May, 1915, he went to New York where he was employed by the Schweinler Press, magazine publishing house, until March, 1917. He then returned to Fort Myers because of ill health. After working as foreman of the Press a short time, he became office deputy sheriff under Frank B. Tippins and served until November, 1918, when he was appointed county judge, which office he held until January, 1929.

Judge Stout then followed life insurance for several years but was forced to give it up because of failing sight. Cataract operations in 1940 restored his vision. On July 1, 1943, he became a clerk in the tax assessor's office and served until January 1, 1945, when he became associate clerk in the county judge's office, which position he was holding in 1948.

Judge Stout has been active in church and lodge work. He served as superintendent of St. Luke's Church School from July, 1896, to 1938 and is now superintendent emeritus. He has been a lay reader of St. Luke's since 1889 and is now an honorary vestryman. His Masonic affiliations are: Tropical Lodge, No. 56; Poinciana Chapter, No. 50; Fort Myers Council R.S.M., No. 25; Fort Myers Commandery, No. 32; Fort

Myers Chapter O.E.S., No. 31; York Court of Honor, Priory No. 10, Miami.

During World War I Judge Stout served as chief clerk of the Lee County draft board.

On November 13, 1898, Judge Stout was married to Ola McLeod. They have five children: Mary Lorena, now Mrs. Donald J. Powers, Evanston, Ill.; Frank McLeod, now with Edison Laboratories, Orange, N. J.; Olive Catherine, now Mrs. Virgil N. Skyes, society editor, Lakeland Ledger, Lakeland, Fla.; and Nathan Paul and Charles Byron, both of Fort Myers.

### LARKIN MOSES STROUP

Larkin Moses Stroup was born January 25, 1860, in Roswell, Ga., the son of Benjamin and Sarah Stroup. He came to South Florida in 1886 while the Florida Southern railroad was being extended to Punta Gorda. When the line was completed he came on to Fort Myers and opened a livery stable. Later he operated a ferry across the river and ran a schooner between Fort Myers and Tampa.

In 1888 he was elected marshal of the town and served in that capacity many years, acquiring a statewide reputation for fearlessness. More than any other man, perhaps, he was instrumental in curbing the

feuding, fighting cowboys who often caused trouble in Fort Myers in the days when it was a frontier cow town.

On July 4, 1897, Marshal Stroup arrested a friend of Dennis Sheridan, one of the toughest cowboys that ever rode the range in South Florida. Sheridan went out looking for Stroup the next day, saw him in front of Williams' drug store, and sank his knife into the marshal's shoulder. The marshal fell but managed to kick Sheridan away. The cowboy lunged at him again but Stroup drew his gun and shot him through the heart. Sheridan fell dead just as he was lashing a third time at the marshal's throat.

Mr. Stroup later served Fort Myers as a member of the town and city councils. He was also a game warden and an honorary deputy sheriff for many years. He was the last survivor of the charter members of Tropical Lodge No. 56, F.&A.M. He was also a member of Poinciana Chapter No. 50 Royal Arch Masons, Fort Myers Commandery of Knights Templar, and Egypt Temple Shrine, Tampa.

Mr. Stroup died September 28, 1943, just ten days after the death of his wife. He was survived by three daughters, Mrs. Pearl Hibble, Mrs. Ruby Reif and Mrs. Loie May Russell.

### CAPT. ANDREW L. KINZIE

Capt. Andrew L. Kinzie was born in Eulau, Germany, November 15, 1875, the son of Rheinhold and Ernestine (Betterman) Kinzie. (See Index: Rheinbold Kinzie).

Andrew Kinzie attended the Fort Myers public school and during vacations and after school worked in local stores. After he was graduated he taught several terms in Lee County schools. In 1898 he went to Tampa and started working for the Plant System Steamship Line on the "Margaret" which plied between Port Tampa and Bradenton. Later he served as purser on the "St. Lucie."

After the Coast Line came into Fort Myers in 1904 Andrew joined with his brother George, who had been chief engineer on the "St. Lucie," and organized the Kinzie Brothers Steamer Line. They started in business with the "Belle of Myers" and later acquired larger and better boats. For many years they carried the mail and provided transportation facilities for the islands between Punta Rassa and Punta Gorda, making stops at Sanibel, St. James, Captiva, Useppa, Pineland and Bokeelia. Thousands of tourists who wintered at Fort Myers made excursions on the Kinzie boats. (See Index: Kinzie Brothers Steamer Line.)

In 1928, the Kinzie Brothers established an automobile ferry service from Punta



CAPT. A. L. KINZIE

Rassa to Sanibel with the ferry boat "Best," making four trips daily. In 1939, the "Islander," a large, double-ended ferry boat which held 20 autos and 100 passengers, was added to the line. In 1942 it was purchased by the Army and used at Pensacola. In 1946 another "Islander," a 65-foot, 10-auto ferry, was put in use.

In addition to furnishing steamboat and ferry service, the Kinzie line has supplied Fort Myers with oyster shells, dredged from the bottom of the river, and has furnished barge service for shipping citrus fruit from up-river points to Fort Myers packing houses.

Shortly after the turn of the century, Mr. Kinzie was elected to the town council and served five two-year terms. While he was in office, Fort Myers was incorporated as a city and launched its first important program of public works, including street and sidewalk improvements, installation of a waterworks and sewerage system, and construction of seawalls.

Mr. Kinzie has been a trustee and elder for many years of the Presbyterian Church and is a member of the Elks Lodge. He is a director of the Lee County Bank and the First Federal Building & Loan Association.

On October 15, 1907, Mr. Kinzie was married to Charlotte Eyber, a native of New York, whose family lived for many years on Captiva Island. They have three children: Dorothy Agnes, born November 18, 1910; Ernest, born February 12, 1912, and Charlotte, born April 12, 1915. Ernest is now his father's partner in the business.

George F. Kinzie, older brother of Andrew, was born in Eulau, Germany, December 29, 1874. He was one of the leading citizens of Fort Myers and one of the largest property owners. He was a trustee and steward of the First Methodist Church and a director of the Lee County Bank, Title and Trust Company. He had been one of the officers of the Citizens Bank of East Fort Myers and when the bank failed he and R. A. Henderson, Sr., raised \$45,000 with which to pay the depositors in full.

George Kinzie died July 11, 1932, and was survived by his widow, Nellie Hibble Kinzie, and two sons, George R. and Norman.

#### ERIC W. KINZIE

Eric Waldemar Kinzie was born May 31, 1877, in Eulau, Germany, the son of Rheinhold and Ernestine (Betterman) Kinzie. (See Index: Rheinhold Kinzie.)

Eric was educated in the Fort Myers public school and passed examinations which permitted him to teach in the primary



ERIC W. KINZIE

grades. Instead of teaching, however, he went to work helping his mother in a small bakery she established. He also kept cows and sold milk, and farmed, raising vegetables and sugar cane. He had in addition, an interest in the Kinzie Brothers Steamer Line which he sold to his two brothers, Andrew and George, in 1918.

In 1908 Mr. Kinzie planted an orange grove just east of the town corporation line where he also raised bananas and vegetables. In 1932, when citrus fruit was selling at such low prices that growers could make no profit, he turned part of his land into a rose garden, becoming the first to grow roses commercially in Fort Myers.

The venture was so successful that Mr. Kinzie yearly increased the size of his rose garden and started making shipments to all parts of South Florida. The name Kinzie's Rose Garden was formally adopted in 1936 and in the following year he went into the floral business, retail as well as wholesale.

In 1933 Mr. Kinzie was elected city councilman from the Second District and was re-elected in 1935, 1937 and 1939, through almost the entire depression period. (See Index: Depression.) He did not seek re-election in 1941 although urged by many to continue to serve.

On February 3, 1916, Mr. Kinzie was married to Marie Bernadette Sander, whose parents were pioneer settlers of Estero

Island. They have two sons: Waldemar Bernard, born November 28, 1916, and Girard Eric, born February 21, 1919. On June 21, 1940, Girard was married to Eleanor Rinkel, of Fort Myers. They have two daughters: Marie, born May 28, 1942, and Betty Ann, born July 19, 1945.

Waldemar Bernard and Girard Kinzie are associated in business with their father.

### HARVIE E. HEITMAN

Harvie Earnhardt Heitman was born December 17, 1872, in Lexington, N. C. the son of M. A. and Louise Josephine (Earnhardt) Heitman. He was educated in Lexington schools and came to Fort Myers in October, 1888, to clerk for his great-uncle, Howell A. Parker, a pioneer Fort Myers merchant. Mr. Parker's business failed during the panic of 1893 and in 1894, after Mr. Parker had left town, Mr. Heitman started in business for himself on the northwest corner of First and Jackson.

With the financial assistance of A. M. McGregor, Mr. Heitman built the first brick building in Fort Myers in 1897 on the site of his store. Mrs. McGregor, after her husband's death, backed Mr. Heitman in 1905 in building the Bradford Hotel, and in making two large additions to the structure in 1908 and 1910.



HARVIE E. HEITMAN

Mr. Heitman was closely associated with John T. Murphy and D.A.G. Floweree, both of Helena, Mont., the first millionaires to build winter homes in Fort Myers. In 1900 he supervised the planting of a 300-acre grove for Mr. Floweree and managed it for the next twenty-one years.

In 1914 Mr. Heitman built the two-story, 193-foot long, \$85,000 Earnhardt Building, the two-story \$25,000 building on the northwest corner of First and Hendry and a \$10,000 garage building on Bay Street.

Mr. Heitman moved his general store into his brick building at First and Jackson in 1897 and shortly afterward began specializing in groceries. Aided by his brother Gilmer, he developed the concern into one of the leading stores in South Florida. He was also engaged in many other business activities. He built the first modern livery stable in Fort Myers and brought into town the first Kentucky thoroughbreds. In 1904, he established the first hack line to Naples. With E. L. Evans he was associated for many years in the hardware business. He built the first concrete sidewalk in the town, erected the first white way, and took a leading part in the construction of the first seawalls.

Mr. Heitman was associated with W. L. Velie, auto manufacturer, in planting a large mango and avocado grove on Fisher- man's Key, off Punta Rassa, and for a number of years managed the Fort Myers affairs of Thomas A. Edison. He was credited with having persuaded Mrs. Tootie McGregor Terry to purchase the Royal Palm Hotel in 1907. For twenty-one years he served as a member of the town and city council and was council president several terms.

Mr. Heitman became the owner of a large part of the business section of Fort Myers and also owned several large citrus grove properties in the county. He was president of the Bank of Fort Myers, H. E. Heitman Company, Lee County Packing Company, Mutual Realty Company, Bonita Land Company, Fort Myers Southern Railway Company, Heitman-Evans Company, Lee County Fair Association, vice-president of the Fort Myers Golf and Country Club, and founder-member of the Board of Trade. He also was a member of the Episcopal Church and a charter member of Fort Myers Lodge No. 1288, B.P.O.E.

On October 6, 1897, he was married to Miss Florida A. Shultz, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George A. Shultz. He died April 17, 1922, following a long illness and was survived by his widow, a daughter, Lorraine, and his brother Gilmer M. Heitman. (See Index: Heitman, Harvie E.)

### VERNON G. WIDERQUIST

Vernon G. Widerquist was born January 13, 1888, in Moline, Ill., the son of Capt. and Mrs. Gustav F. Widerquist. His father homesteaded near Estero, Fla., in 1889 and was engineer of steamboats on the Menge Brothers Line for many years. He died January 1, 1940.

Vernon was educated in Fort Myers schools and when a young man became associated with Carl F. Roberts in the lumber business and other undertakings. Following the death of Mr. Roberts, he became president of the Seminole Lumber Company in which he had long been active.

During World War I he was commissioned as a captain and served two years overseas as adjutant at Hospital No. 29. He was one of the first commanders of the American Legion. In 1921 he was elected to serve as one of Fort Myers' first city commissioners and later was appointed mayor. He also served as president and director of the Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Widerquist died July 27, 1942, at Veterans Hospital, Tucson, Ariz. He was survived by his widow, Mrs. Johnette Odom Widerquist, two children, Vernon R. and Ann, and by his mother, Mrs. G. F. Widerquist.

### GEORGE F. IRELAND

George F. Ireland was born December 14, 1853, in Murray, (West) Canada. Coming to Fort Myers in 1895, he opened a tin shop next to Harvie E. Heitman's store at First and Jackson and later built up one of the largest hardware stores in southwest Florida. Shortly after the turn of the century he became distributor for the Gulf Refining Company and constructed tanks and warehouses on the old Blount wharf at the foot of Hendry Street. This wharf was later known as Ireland's dock.

In 1908 Mr. Ireland sold his hardware business to the Heitman-Evans Company and thereafter devoted all his time to the oil business.

Mr. Ireland was a member of the town council many terms and was one of the group which signed notes to make possible the first improvement of Fort Myers streets. (See Index: Street improvements.) He also served many terms as a member of the Lee County School Board. He was a charter member of Tropical Lodge No. 56, F.&A.M. and served five times as its worshipful master. He was one of the founders of the Masonic Club which had its clubhouse near the present intersection of First and Broadway.

On August 30, 1881, he was married to Ida Menge, of Elkport, Iowa.



DAVID W. IRELAND

Mr. Ireland died December 7, 1923. He was survived by his widow, a son, David W., three daughters, Mrs. Harry Laycock, Mrs. J. M. Clark, and Mrs. F. W. Poos, a sister, Mrs. G. V. Preston, and three brothers, W. W., J. F. and C. C.

### DAVID W. IRELAND

David W. Ireland was born October 24, 1889, in Wildwood, Fla., the son of George F. and Ida (Menge) Ireland who moved to Fort Myers in 1895.

Mr. Ireland attended the public school in Fort Myers and was graduated from high school in 1907. He then attended a private engineering school in Fort Myers taught by a retired professor from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, completing the equivalent of a college course in thirty months.

While attending school, Mr. Ireland worked part time and during vacations for his father in his tin shop, as the engineer in William B. Towles steam laundry, and for the Menge Brothers Steamboat Line.

In 1910 he started working for the Bowers Southern Dredging Company which had the contract for dredging a 10-foot channel in the Caloosahatchee from Punta Rassa to Fort Myers. Soon afterward he became assistant superintendent of operations for the Furst-Clark Construction Company

which had a contract from the state for extensive drainage operations in the Lake Okeechobee area.

When this concern late in 1912 moved its headquarters from Fort Myers to Miami, Mr. Ireland resigned and organized the Gulf Construction Company, of which he became president. This concern built practically all the seawalls in and near Fort Myers and also handled scores of dredging jobs. During the late Twenties the company expanded its operations and took contracts all along the West Coast and as far north on the Atlantic Coast as Charleston, S. C., handling many projects for the United States Engineers.

Following the death of his father in 1923, Mr. Ireland took over the Gulf distributorship which he operated in conjunction with his construction company. In 1932 he moved his warehouses and tanks down near the foot of Dean Street. During the mid-Thirties his construction company handled many of the dredging operations required for the opening of the cross-state waterway. Mr. Ireland sold his interest in the construction company in 1938 and took up cattle raising as a sideline to his oil business.

For many years Mr. Ireland has devoted a large part of his time to welfare activities. He served sixteen years as president of the Lee County Welfare Federation, during the entire depression period, and the American Legion in 1933 named him the most outstanding man in Lee County because of his achievements in co-ordinating the various welfare organizations.

In 1935 he was appointed by Gov. David Sholtz to serve as a member of District No. 8 Welfare Board and he was later re-appointed to the board by Gov. Fred Cone and Gov. Spessard Holland. He resigned from the district board in 1943 to accept appointment by Gov. Holland to the State Welfare Board of which he was vice-chairman in 1948. Mr. Ireland is also a director of the Lee Memorial Hospital. He is a 32nd degree Mason and a Shriner, and a member of the Rotary Club and the Presbyterian Church.

On June 12, 1912, Mr. Ireland was married to Anna Turner, of Monticello, Ga. They have a daughter, Barbara, who was married August 11, 1943, to John Beckett. Mr. and Mrs. Beckett have a daughter, Susan, born April 21, 1945.

#### DR. BENJAMIN P. MATHESON

Dr. Benjamin Perry Matheson was born June 6, 1864, at Liberty Hill, S. C., of Scotch parentage. He received his early education in a South Carolina military academy and his M.D. degree at the medical college of the College of Charleston, in Charleston, S. C.

Coming to Florida to practice, Dr. Matheson located at Oviedo where he met Julia Lee, daughter of James H. and Laura (Barnett) Lee, both native Floridians. They were married on April 21, 1895, and came to Fort Myers on their honeymoon. They liked the town so well that they decided to make it their future home.

Dr. Matheson opened an office early in 1896 and also established a wholesale and retail drug store on Jackson Street, close to the river. During the years which followed, he became one of the leading physicians of southwest Florida. Many of his patients lived on the keys, as far south as Everglades, and in response to urgent calls he often left home late at night, went by horse and buggy through the swamps to Punta Rassa and made the rest of his journey by boat. For many of his calls he was paid in fruit, vegetables and fish.

In 1905 Dr. Matheson purchased the old Braman homestead at First and Hendry and constructed the first substantial building on the south side of the main street. Stone block was used in its construction; hence, it was called the Stone Block Building. Later, Dr. Matheson built an addition and opened the Leon Hotel. The First National Bank had its first quarters on the first floor of the building. The property was sold by Dr. Matheson to Peter and Henry Tonnelier in 1912 for \$150,000. Shortly afterward, the doctor was forced to retire because of deafness, but he continued to devote much of his time to his citrus groves, four of which were located at Bonita Springs and two at Oviedo.

Throughout his life, Dr. Matheson took pleasure in helping young men and women gain an education, and he assisted seventeen financially in becoming pharmacists, physicians and teachers.

He was a member of the board of elders of the Presbyterian Church which erected the present church building. Dr. Matheson died March 31, 1937, and Mrs. Matheson August 17, 1937. They were survived by their only child, Marguerite, who on July 31, 1939, was married to Edgar Benson Nichols, of Griffin, Ga. By a previous marriage Mrs. Nichols has a son, Benjamin Matheson Nichols who in 1948 was a pre-medical student at Emory University, Atlanta, Ga.

#### GILMER M. HEITMAN, SR.

Gilmer McCrary Heitman was born February 19, 1881, in Lexington, N. C., the son of McCrary and Josephine (Earnhardt) Heitman. He attended Lexington public schools and then took a business course in the Sullivan-Crichton Business College, in Atlanta, Ga.

Coming to Fort Myers in 1896, Mr. Heitman became associated with his brother, Harvie E. Heitman, who then owned a general store at the corner of First and Jackson streets. He continued to be connected with his brother, in almost all of his widely extended activities, until Harvie's death on April 17, 1922.

In 1899 Mr. Heitman secured a franchise from the county commissioners and organized the Lee County Telephone Company which went into operation February 21, 1900. (See Index: Telephones.) In 1924 Mr. Heitman sold the company to the Collier interests.

He was instrumental in getting the post office located on its present site; also in the development of most of the subdivisions between Fort Myers and Tice. He developed Bonita Springs Town site and constructed the Bonita Hotel. He represented General Terry's large interests in Lee County, including the Royal Palm Hotel, until the general's death.

He was president of the Heitman-Evans Co., hardware company.

In 1935 Mr. Heitman purchased the Franklin Arms Hotel and has owned it ever since. He also is the owner of orange groves and a cattle ranch. He was vice-president of the Bank of Fort Myers and is now a stockholder in the Lee County Bank. He is president of the Caloosa Grove & Improvement Co., West Coast Land Co., Franklin Arms Hotel Co., Home Insurance Agency, and Mutual Realty Company and is a director in the Lee County Packing Co.

On June 18, 1908, Mr. Heitman was married to Nina A. S. Travers, daughter of Marcus and Adeline Blair Travers. Her father was born in London, Eng., and her mother in Scotland. Mr. and Mrs. Heitman have two children: Gilmer M., Jr., and Dorothy Louise.

#### JAMES EDGAR FOXWORTHY

James Edgar Foxworthy was born in Mt. Carmel, Ky., in 1868, the son of Squire Evans and Sarah Catherine (Kelly) Foxworthy. He came to Fort Myers in 1893 and soon afterward opened a clothing store, one of the first in town. He was married in 1898 to Sarah Matilda Hendry, daughter of James E. Hendry, Sr.

When the Citizens Bank & Trust Company, of Tampa, opened a Fort Myers branch in 1901, Mr. Foxworthy was appointed cashier and he continued to serve in that capacity when the bank became home owned in 1907, its name being changed to



GILMER McCRARY HEITMAN, SR.

the Bank of Fort Myers. Mr. Foxworthy was named president of the bank after the death of Harvie E. Heitman and continued to head it until the bank closed, in 1931. He later was engaged in the insurance business.

Mr. Foxworthy died February 27, 1943. He was survived by his widow and two daughters, Mrs. Albert Mellen and Mrs. W. L. Clarke, Jr., and four grandchildren.

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#### JOHN MORGAN DEAN

John Morgan Dean was born on May 11, 1856, in Worcester, Mass., the son of John and Mary (Morgan) Dean. After being educated in Massachusetts schools he entered the furniture business in Providence, R. I., later founding the John M. Dean Furniture Company and the Household Furniture Company, both of which had branches throughout Rhode Island. He also had large apple and peach orchards in that state.

Mr. Dean came to Fort Myers in 1898 to go hunting with his friend Frank Budlong and thereafter came every winter. In 1900 he purchased the 42-acre Barrington estate south on the river and started the Twin Palms Grove. A year later he bought 38 acres adjoining Billy's Creek from Peck Brothers, of Chicago, paying \$8,500. This tract was low and swampy and flooded by the

backwash of the Caloosahatchee during the rainy season. A decade later Mr. Dean began developing it and created the Dean Park of today. (See Chapter VI.)

During the 'Teens Mr. Dean organized the Mutual Development Company which developed many subdivisions throughout the Fort Myers district. He also was one of the organizers of the Lee County Packing Company and headed the Dean Development Company, Dean Brothers Groves, and the United Construction Company.

In 1923 he purchased the S. W. Sanchez homestead on First Street and began to build the Morgan Hotel. He laid out Dean Street to run through the property and the city commission voted to name it after him. (See Chapter VII.)

Mr. Dean died May 5, 1938. He was survived by his widow, Annie Powell Dean, and two grandsons, John Morgan Dean Suesman and Walter Brad Suesman, both of Providence.

#### JOHN W. FUREN

John W. Furen was born March 13, 1872, in Martinsburg, W. Va., the son of John W. and Sarah (Howe) Furen. His father was a native of Holland and his mother of England.

When he was thirteen years old the family came to Florida, locating near Sanford



JOHN W. FUREN

where Mr. Furen, Sr., planted a large orange grove. The trees were just coming into full bearing when they were killed by the big freeze of 1894-95.

Leaving home soon after the freeze, John Furen went to Georgia and farmed a year, near Atlanta. He then returned to Florida, settled on Sanibel Island and planted sixty-five acres in tomatoes. During his third season at Sanibel his entire crop was ruined by high water. Instead of trying again, he went to the mainland and opened a general store on the bayfront south of Estero.

Mr. Furen operated the store for three years, bringing in his merchandise in his own schooner from Key West and Tampa. On June 17, 1904, he was married to Margaret Smith, daughter of John S. and Sarah (Gilfillan) Smith, who had come to Estero with her parents three years before from Pennsylvania. Before her marriage Miss Smith had taught a year at the newly-opened Estero school and a year at Fort Myers.

On their honeymoon, Mr. and Mrs. Furen went to San Juan, Puerto Rico, where they lived six months, Mr. Furen being employed by the New York Citrus Company of Puerto Rico, supervising the planting of trees.

Returning to Florida, Mr. Furen went into the citrus business, first planting a grove at Estero and later a grove at Alva having altogether 233 acres in bearing trees. He



JOHN MORGAN DEAN

also leased groves in all parts of the country. In 1915 he built a large packing plant in East Fort Myers, forming the Furen Packing Company. In addition to handling his own fruit he bought oranges and grapefruit from growers all over Lee County.

Mr. Furen continued in the citrus business, and also bought and sold real estate, until 1944 when he sold his groves and packing plant.

Mr. Furen was elected to represent the fifth ward in the city council in 1933 and was re-elected three times, serving seven and one-half years, throughout almost the entire depression period. (See Index: Depression.) Two decades earlier he served one term as a member of the Lee County school board from the Estero district.

Mr. and Mrs. Furen have a daughter, Flora, who is the wife of Emmett Carmichael. Mr. and Mrs. Carmichael live in New York City and have a daughter, Margaret Sandra, born January 26, 1939.

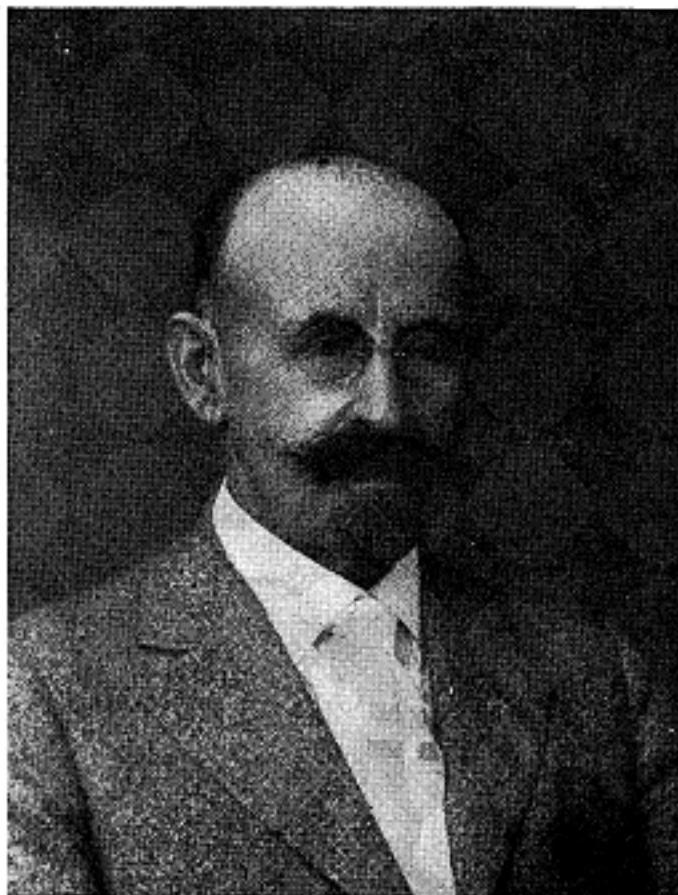
#### FRANCIS W. PERRY

Francis W. Perry was born July 4, 1859, in Bridgeport, Conn., and was educated at Brimfield Academy, Amherst College, and the New England Conservatory of Music. After completing his education he taught mathematics and music in northern schools. He was well known as a composer.

Coming to Florida in 1897, Professor Perry purchased grove properties near Alva, later moved to a farm at Tice, and subsequently made his home in Fort Myers. He reorganized the Fort Myers Concert Band and was its leader for many years.

Professor Perry was one of the pioneer advocates of the Tamiami Trail and aided greatly in its construction by his enthusiastic endorsement of it and by his work in the state legislature to which he was elected as representative from Lee County in 1916, 1918 and 1920. In 1922 he ran for the state senate but was defeated in a close race by a Key West opponent. He strenuously opposed the division of Lee County and prevented it from being divided by the 1921 session of the legislature. He also opposed, unsuccessfully, the construction of a new courthouse in Fort Myers in 1914. (See Index: Courthouse.)

For many years Professor Perry was active in the Board of Trade and served a term as its president. He later helped organize other groups formed to boost Fort Myers and Lee County. He was a director of the Florida Citrus Exchange for many years and was a charter member of the Elks Lodge in Fort Myers. He was a Shriner, a Knight Templar, and a member of Chi Phi fraternity.



FRANCIS W. PERRY

Professor Perry was married October 3, 1906, to Jennie Cormack, of Boston. They had three children: Gordon, Chesley and Elizabeth. He died February 1, 1935.

Chesley (Chet) Perry in 1948 was general manager of the Fort Myers Press. On June 13, 1931, he was married to Janett Conroy. They have two children, Chesley Michael, born March 3, 1941, and Linda Lee, born August 25, 1943.

#### BOYD CLIFTON FOXWORTHY

Boyd Clifton Foxworthy was born April 28, 1878, in Mt. Carmel, Ky., the son of Squire Evans and Sarah Catherine (Kelly) Foxworthy, both natives of Kentucky. He was educated in the public schools of Mt. Carmel and Brooksville, Ind.

After leaving school, Mr. Foxworthy started working in a general merchandise store in Mt. Carmel owned by his father. During the winter of 1899-1900, he came to Fort Myers and worked for three years in the Foxworthy & Company clothing store, owned by his brother, James E. Foxworthy. He then went back to Mt. Carmel and was engaged in the mercantile business for several years. He also served as postmaster of Mt. Carmel from 1906 to 1909.

Returning to Fort Myers in December, 1909, Mr. Foxworthy worked a while for his brothers J. E. and I. E. Foxworthy, and

then became assistant postmaster, first under W. F. Mickle and then under I. E. Foxworthy, an older brother. He resigned that position to take charge of the collection department of the Bank of Fort Myers. On January 12, 1922, he became postmaster and served until May 1, 1924, when he resigned to enter the furniture business with Wiley Lee, buying out the J. B. Cox Furniture Company and forming the firm of Foxworthy & Lee.

This firm was dissolved in 1933, because of the depression, but Mr. Foxworthy soon afterward started in business again at Hendry and Main under the firm name of Foxworthy Furniture Company. In 1940 he moved into his new building on Jackson Street at the head of Main, where he has since been located.

For more than three decades Mr. Foxworthy took an active part in politics and was a member of the Republican State Committee from 1912 to 1945. It was largely through his efforts that a \$210,000 federal appropriation was granted for a new post office in Fort Myers, on February 21, 1931. (See Index: Post Office.)

Mr. Foxworthy is a member of and has been active in Tropical Lodge No. 56, F.&A.M.; Poinciana Chapter No. 50, Royal Arch Masons; Knight Templar, Fort Myers Commandery No. 32; Egypt Temple, Shrine, Tampa, and the First Methodist Church in which he has served as steward for forty-

three years and is now chairman of the board of trustees. He is a member of the Fort Myers Executives Club.

On October 26, 1904, he was married to Mary Norwood Turner, of Mt. Carmel, Ky. They have three children: Eloise Nute, now Mrs. Lewis B. Barber; Clifton Norwood, now of Kansas, and Robert Evans, now associated with his father in business. They also have two grandchildren: Virginia Norwood Barber, born March 9, 1941 and Shirley Norwood Foxworthy, born October 2, 1948.

#### FRANK C. ALDERMAN, SR.

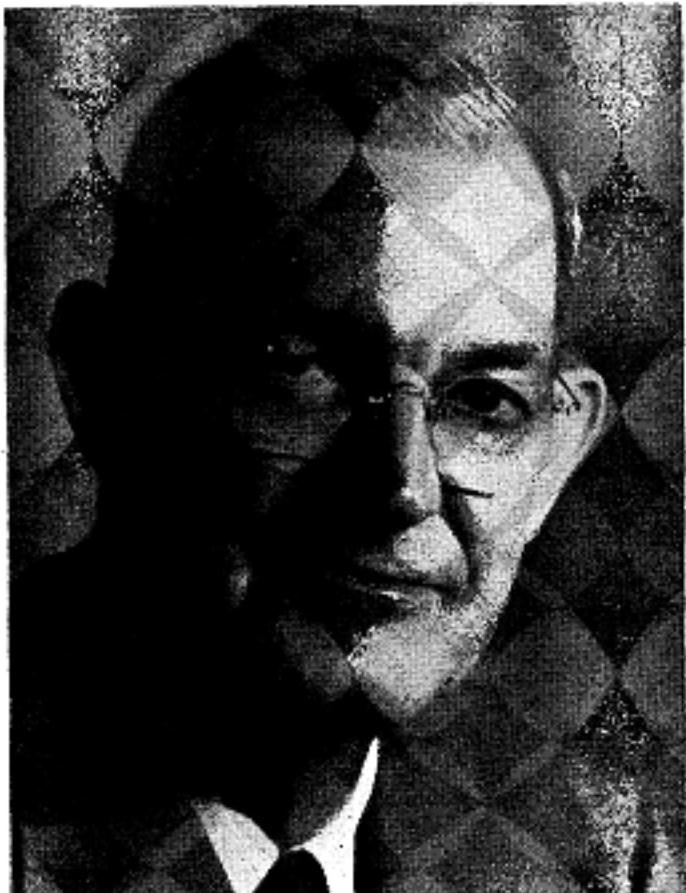
Frank C. Alderman, Sr., was born September 9, 1879, in Batavia, N. Y., the son of Frank N. and Ida (Starks) Alderman. He was educated in the Batavia public schools and at the University of Buffalo from which he was graduated with an LL.B. degree.

In 1900 Mr. Alderman got a leave of absence from the law firm of Moot, Smoot & Lewis, of Buffalo, in which he had become senior clerk, and came to Florida for his health. His father had planned to develop a resort hotel on the Orange River which could be operated in conjunction with a hotel he owned on Lake Erie but his sudden death prevented the plan from being carried out.

Recovering his health, Mr. Alderman opened a law office in Fort Myers and later became associated with the First National Bank. He was named president of the bank in 1921 following the death of Walter G. Langford and served in that capacity until his death on June 10, 1946.

Mr. Alderman was prominently identified with many projects which aided in the development of Fort Myers. He was one of the founders of the Fort Myers Country Club and of the first Board of Trade. He later was connected with many real estate developments, including Dean Park, and aided in the financing of a number of downtown buildings.

He was president of the Fort Myers Southern Railroad between Fort Myers and Naples, was vice-president of the Seminole Lumber Company, and a director of the Lee County Packing Company. He also was an officer and director of the Mutual Realty Company, Dean Development Company, United Construction Company, First National Company, and Commercial Realty Company. He was particularly proud of his successful reorganization of the First National Bank after it had been seriously affected in the wave of bank failures throughout the country in the early 1930's.



BOYD CLIFTON FOXWORTHY

Mr. Alderman was a member of the state board of law examiners, a Mason and an Elk.

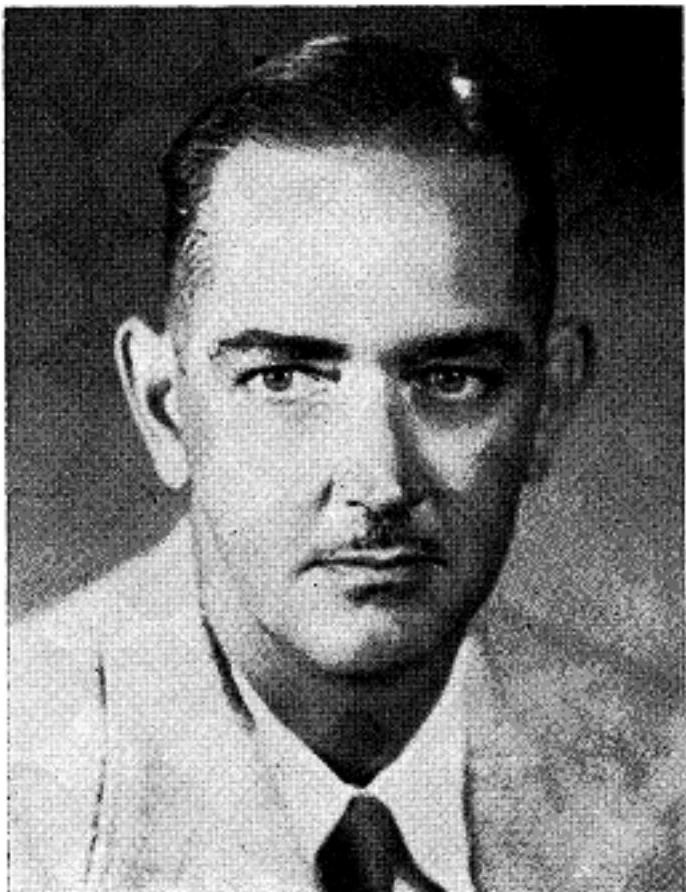
On March 15, 1905, Mr. Alderman was married to Rossie Lewis Evans, daughter of Edward L. and Belle (Hendry) Evans. They had one son, Frank C. Alderman, Jr. Mrs. Alderman died August 29, 1936. On September 29, 1937, Mr. Alderman was married to Mrs. Jennie Burgard, of Buffalo.

### FRANK C. ALDERMAN, JR.

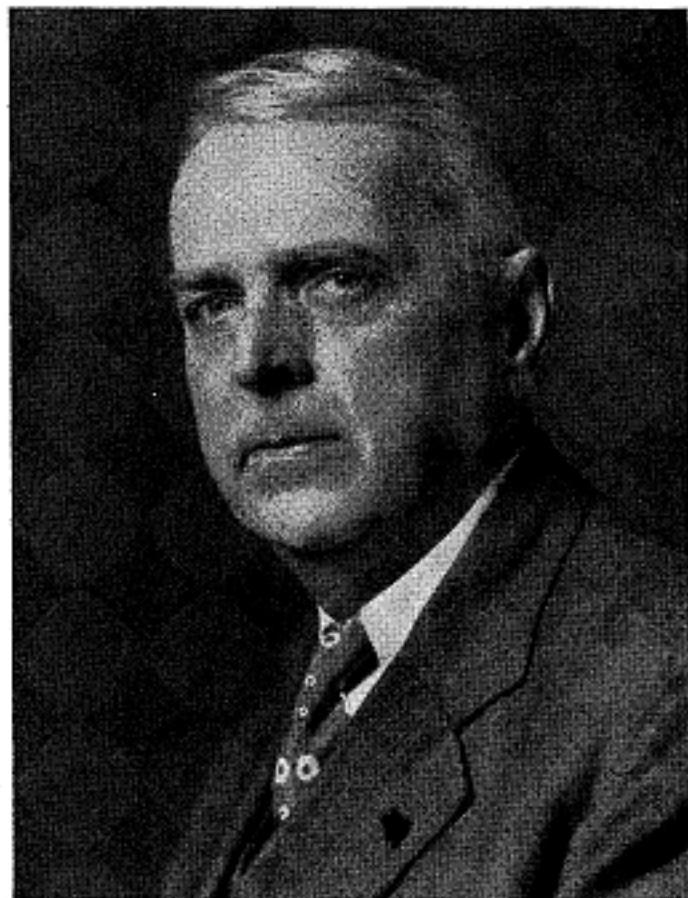
Frank C. Alderman, Jr., was born in Fort Myers February 23, 1911, the son of Frank C. and Rossie (Evans) Alderman.

He attended Fort Myers schools and studied pre-law and law at the University of Virginia, in Charlottesville, Va. He was admitted to the Florida state bar in 1933 and joined his father in the practice of law, the firm then being named Alderman & Alderman. In 1939 he was appointed a director in the First National Bank.

On August 11, 1942, Mr. Alderman was commissioned as a lieutenant (j.g.) in the United States Coast Guard. Sent to the Southwest Pacific, he was in command of an army inter-island cargo ship during the last two years of the war. After the Japanese surrendered he served as a liaison officer in Japan until February 16, 1946.



FRANK C. ALDERMAN, JR.



FRANK C. ALDERMAN, SR.

Returning to Fort Myers, Mr. Alderman resumed the practice of law, and following the death of his father, was named vice-president of the First National Bank. He is the president of the First National Company and a director of the Lee County Packing Company.

Always interested in speed boat racing, Mr. Alderman on March 16, 1941, established a world's record at Lakeland in Class D inboard racing runabout, setting a pace of 45 miles an hour.

He is a member of the Elks Lodge, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Theta Chi fraternity.

On September 5, 1938, Mr. Alderman was married to Elizabeth Sheppard, of Americus, Ga. They have two children, Frank C., III, born August 31, 1939, and Elizabeth Josephine, born November 27, 1940.

### JOHN WALLACE OWENS

John Wallace Owens was born February 22, 1865, in Savannah, Ga., the son of Richard and Lila (Taylor) Owens. He came to Fort Myers in 1903 and was associated for several years with W. C. Battey, one of the town's pioneer real estate men.

Mr. Owens then went into the insurance business and in August, 1914, was elected

city clerk, which position he held for many years. After leaving that office he was engaged in accounting work.

On September 17, 1902, Mr. Owens was married to Fossie Felker, of Ozark, Ark. They had a daughter, Janet, who in 1948 was a teacher at Gwynne Institute. Mr. Owens died March 7, 1934.

Mrs. Owens has been registrar of vital statistics since May 1913.

### HARRY AMOS LAYCOCK

Harry Amos Laycock was born February 19, 1876, in Joplin, Mo., the son of George W. and Mary (Perry) Laycock. His father was a native of England and his mother's people were Virginians who settled in Illinois. In 1883 the Laycock family moved to Candler, Fla., near Ocala, where the father planted an orange grove.

Mr. Laycock attended public schools in Candler and during his spare time helped his father. After his father's death on October 19, 1890, he took over the management of the property. The grove was killed in the Big Freeze of 1894-95 and for several years thereafter Mr. Laycock worked for other grove owners.

In the fall of 1899 he enrolled at the University of Florida, then located at Lake



MRS. MARY LAYCOCK

City, and played center on the 'Gators' first football team. He also played baseball. Completing a two-year electrical course in 1901 he started working for the Florida Electric Company, of Jacksonville, and helped install telephone systems in Tallahassee, Kissimmee and Apalachicola.

In March, 1903, Mr. Laycock came to Fort Myers for his company to sell electrical machinery to the Seminole Power & Ice Company. The sale made, he stayed on to install the machinery and later to become plant manager.

On June 1, 1905, Mr. Laycock was married to Bertie Ireland, daughter of George F. and Ida (Menge) Ireland. Shortly thereafter he became associated with Mr. Ireland and remained with him four years. From 1909 to 1926 he was engaged in contracting, handling plumbing supplies. Since then he has devoted his time to property management.

Mr. Laycock joined the Volunteer Fire Department when it was first organized and served as its chief from 1905 to 1916. During that period he took a leading part in the drives to get the first gasoline fire engine and the first modern fire fighting apparatus. (See Index: Volunteer Fire Department.)

Mrs. Mary Laycock came to Fort Myers with her son in 1903 and became an active church worker, first with the Methodist Church and later with the Presbyterian Church, of which she was a charter member. In both churches she taught boys' Sunday School classes.

Partly because of her love for children and partly because of her love for books, Mrs. Laycock took a prominent part in helping with the first reading room in Fort Myers. Later she was named by the Woman's Club, the sponsoring organization, to serve as chairman of a committee to solicit funds to keep the reading room open. She held the chairmanship for over twenty years, until 1926, making collections from all subscribers. Largely because of her untiring work, the reading room was maintained and enlarged to a regular library. (See Index: Public Library.) She died in May, 1932.

Mrs. Harry Laycock also has been active in library work, having served as treasurer of the library board since 1928. She was a member of the original hospital board, formed in 1912, and served until after the first hospital was opened and placed in operation in 1916.

### ROBERT VIVIAN LEE

Robert Vivian Lee was born June 29, 1893, in McIntosh, Fla., the son of Henry A. and Emma (Whittington) Lee. His father, a native of Louisiana, was a grove owner and merchant in McIntosh. He moved to Alva in 1903 and operated a general store and hotel there until 1922 when he came to Fort Myers where he lived until his death on February 22, 1933.

Vivian Lee attended public schools in McIntosh and was graduated from Alva High School in 1910. During the following two years he worked in his father's store and in a packing house. In 1913 he left Alva and studied a year at the Pierce School of Business Administration in Philadelphia. He then worked for a woolen goods manufacturer in Philadelphia until the United States entered World War I. Going to Washington, he worked in the War Department until the following September when he enlisted in the army.

Soon after enlisting, Mr. Lee was sent to General Pershing's headquarters in Chauumont, France, where he remained until the headquarters were transferred to Tours. He was at headquarters all during the war in charge of personnel in the chief surgeon's office, with the rank of master sergeant. He came back to the States in May, 1919.

After visiting his parents in Alva, he worked for nearly a year in the Baltimore office of John R. Livesey Company, a concern which specialized in the construction of cold storage room and cork products. Returning to Fort Myers in March, 1920, he clerked a short time in a clothing company and then was employed as deputy clerk of circuit court by J. F. Garner. He served as deputy until January 1, 1925, when he became county tax collector. He served four full four-year terms until January 7, 1941.

Mr. Lee then entered the real estate business as a broker and insurance agent. In 1943 he built an 8-unit apartment house on Richmond Street and in 1946-47 built the 16-unit Arvelee Apartment House on First Street.

Mr. Lee has been active in civic and fraternal affairs. He is a past master of Tropical Lodge No. 56, F.&A.M., past high priest in Poinciana Lodge No. 50, Royal Arch Masons; past commander, Fort Myers Commandery No. 32, Knight Templar; past worthy patron in Fort Myers chapter, Order Eastern Star; member of American Legion since 1919; president of Lee Memorial Hospital and board member for ten years; past president of Kiwanis Club; past district deputy Fort Myers Lodge No. 1288, B.P.O.E., and was a member of the board of stewards of the First Methodist Church for twelve years.



ROBERT VIVIAN LEE

On February 21, 1921, Mr. Lee was married to Rossie Bass, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Bass, a pioneer Fort Myers family. Mr. and Mrs. Lee have two children: Edna Leona, born November 23, 1921, now the wife of Brian C. Lynn, and Robert Milton, born January 3, 1930, who was married March 28, 1948, to Lois Daniels, of Chicago, and in 1948-49 was a student at the University of Florida.

### LEONARD SANTINI

Leonard Santini was born July 8, 1884, in Key West, Fla., the son of Nicholas and Frances (Daniels) Santini, both members of pioneer families of the Ten Thousand Islands.

Mr. Santini was educated in the public school at Chocoloskee where his parents had lived for many years. In 1901 the family moved to Miami where it remained a year and then moved to Key West.

From early boyhood, Mr. Santini had sailed the waters of the West Coast and become familiar with all the waterways through the keys, and in 1904 he was employed by Admiral Grinnell, of Boston, who spent his winters in Florida waters fishing and hunting. Mr. Santini worked for him four years, first on the yacht "Gypsy" and later on the "Ranger."

In 1908 Mr. Santini started farming in the Iona district but had no success, losing the capital he had saved. So he went back to guiding and fishing to accumulate enough capital again to make another try. He made the second venture in 1917, planting a small tract close to the river. This time he was successful. Each year thereafter he increased his acreage and in time became one of the largest truck growers in southwest Florida. After the mid-Twenties he specialized in raising potatoes.

Selling his farming interests in 1944, Mr. Santini built the Side o' Sea Cottages on Fort Myers Beach to keep himself occupied.

Mr. Santini is a former director of the Lee County Chamber of Commerce and is a member of the Exchange Club, Knights of Columbus, and St. Francis Xavier Church.

On September 17, 1908, Mr. Santini was married to Nellie Shanahan, daughter of Mr. and Henry Shanahan, a pioneer family of Sanibel Island. They have two daughters: Delores, now Mrs. Ralph Schultz, of Detroit, and Nellie, now Mrs. John Walsh, of Plainfield, N. J.

#### DR. FRANKLIN MILES

Dr. Franklin Miles was born November 15, 1845, at Olmstead Falls, near Cleveland, O., the son of Charles J. and Electa (Lawrence) Miles, both descendants of



DR. FRANKLIN MILES

families which came to America in Colonial times.

He received his early education in private schools of the East and later took a scientific course at Yale and received his B.S. degree at Sheffield Scientific School, at New Haven. He then studied law and received an LL.B. degree at Columbia University. Soon, however, he decided that he would rather be a physician than a lawyer so he studied medicine at Rush Medical College, in Chicago, and received an M.D. degree. Later he took special courses at the Chicago Medical College and the University of Michigan and served an internship at the Illinois State Eye and Ear Infirmary, in Chicago.

Dr. Miles started practicing at Elkhart, Ind., in a territory where most of the people lived on farms. In 1887 he founded the Dr. Miles Medical Company to compound, package and distribute a number of remedies he had found were most effective in the treatment of some of the more common ailments—Nervine, Dr. Miles Anti-Pain Pills, and Dr. Miles Heart Cure. He also founded Dr. Miles Grand Dispensary where diseases were diagnosed by experts. The dispensary and his remedies, soon sold throughout the entire country, made him nationally famous.

Dr. Miles made valuable contributions to the literature of his profession, his treatises dealing with the cure of dropsy, epilepsy, hysteria, insanity, and diseases of the heart, stomach, liver and kidneys. He was nationally recognized as a foremost heart specialist.

During the winter of 1904-05, Dr. Miles came to Fort Myers to stay a few weeks. He liked the region so well that he purchased the home of Walter G. Langford on First Street and later acquired several thousand acres between Fort Myers and Punta Rassa. Few vegetables were grown then on a commercial scale in that locality and, upon asking why, Dr. Miles was told that crops would not flourish due to climatic conditions, unsuitable soil and destructive insects.

Doubting the accuracy of the statements, Dr. Miles began making an intensive study of agriculture as practiced in other parts of the world where similar climatic conditions prevailed. He made countless analyses of the soil to determine what fertilizers were needed for various crops. He made thousands of experiments to learn how insects and plant diseases could best be combatted. To test the soundness of his conclusions, he planted hundreds of experimental gardens.

At first, Dr. Miles was looked upon as sort of an eccentric. Later, however, when it was learned how his gardens flourished he became recognized as one of the foremost agricultural authorities in South Florida.

Largely as a result of his efforts, the Iona district was developed rapidly. Scores of truckers attended a school he established with practical courses devoted chiefly to the preparation of the land and the cultivation and spraying of crops and his "students" later became leading growers of vegetables for the northern markets.

On April 22, 1873, Dr. Miles was married to Ellen Douglas Lighthall. They had three children: Charles F., Mrs. Marian Collins and Mrs. J. B. Porter. His wife died August 24, 1881. On July 17, 1895, he was married again, to Elizabeth Ann State. They had two daughters, Teresa, who died when eight years old, and Louise E.

On February 13, 1925, Louise Miles was married to Arthur Donald Bass, son of Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Bass, of Fort Myers. They have three children: Miles, born June 1, 1926; Sidney Ann, born May 19, 1938, and James Shepard, born February 12, 1942.

#### JAMES B. PARKER

James B. Parker was born November 15, 1885, in Richland, Ga. After attending public schools in Richland he took a commercial course in the Georgia-Alabama Business College, in Macon, Ga.

Mr. Parker started in business in Valdosta, Ga., but decided he would rather live in Florida so in 1905 he came to Fort Myers



JAMES B. PARKER



CHARLES A. POWELL, JR.

and started working as a bookkeeper in Henderson's Cash Store. In 1910 he went into business for himself, opening Parker's Book Store, now one of the oldest business establishments in the city.

Although Mr. Parker devoted most of his time to his store he took an active interest in civic affairs. He was a charter member of the Kiwanis Club and a member of Tropical Lodge No. 56, F.&A.M.; Egypt Temple, Shrine, Tampa, and the Chamber of Commerce.

On May 31, 1907, Mr. Parker was married to Bessie Henderson, daughter of Bryan E. and Roberta (Skinner) Henderson, a pioneer Fort Myers family. They had two sons: James B., born March 10, 1908, who died when he was twenty-three years old, and Douglas Harold, born October 5, 1919.

Mr. Parker died June 2, 1947.

#### CHARLES A. POWELL, JR.

Charles A. Powell, Jr., was born in Fort Myers October 2, 1910, the son of Charles A. and Mary C. (Gilliam) Powell. (See Index: Charles A. Powell, Sr.)

He attended Fort Myers school and was graduated from High School in 1928. He then studied two years at the University of Florida where he was made assistant manager of the 'Gators football team and became a member of Theta Chi fraternity.

Leaving the university in the spring of 1931, Mr. Powell started working at the Morgan Hotel, serving four years as assistant manager and three years as manager. In 1937 he became the Fort Myers distributor for the American Oil Company. He sold this business in the early fall of 1948 to become manager of Lee Motors, Inc., of Fort Myers, assuming his new duties November 1.

Mr. Powell was a charter member of the Lions Club and served two years as its secretary. He is a past exalted ruler and now a trustee of the Elks Lodge, a past president of the Exchange Club, and a member of the Chamber of Commerce, Junior Chamber of Commerce, and the Fort Myers Automobile Dealers Association.

On May 19, 1934, Mr. Powell was married to Eudora Kurtz, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James M. Kurtz, of Memphis, Tenn. They have two sons, Charles A., III, born November 9, 1936, and William Roger, born August 8, 1939.

#### JOHN M. BORING

John M. Boring was born March 6, 1872, on a farm in Lee County, Georgia, the son of Isaac W. and Isabella (Larimore) Boring, both natives of Georgia.

In 1884 the family moved to Citra, Fla., where the father engaged in truck farming and planted an orange grove. The trees

were just coming into full bearing when they were destroyed by the 1894-95 freeze.

Mr. Boring left home shortly afterward and engaged in phosphating, working at many places in central Florida. In 1909 he moved to Sanibel Island, acquired land and started truck farming. He also planted a grove.

Appointed county agricultural agent, Mr. Boring moved to Fort Myers late in 1915. He served as agricultural agent five years, during which time he helped to put on the first county fairs. On March 10, 1920, he was appointed county tax assessor and he has held that office ever since, being re-elected seven times.

Mr. Boring is a member of Tropical Lodge N. 56, F.&A.M., a Knight of the Royal Arch, Knight Templar, Shriner, and a member of the I.O.O.F., Knights of Pythias, and B.P.O.E. He was a charter member of the Kiwanis Club and has been a steward of the First Methodist Church for more than a quarter century.

Mr. Boring was married in 1897 to Maymie Ross, daughter of Frank Ross, cattleman and citrus grower of Marion County. They had two daughters: Esther, now living with her father, and Maymie, now deceased, who became the wife of Dwight Lambe. Mr. and Mrs. Lambe had a son, Dwight Lambe, Jr., who in 1948 was attending the University of Florida. Mrs. Boring died in 1945.



JOHN M. BORING

#### ELMO M. BALLARD

Elmo M. Ballard was born January 28, 1897, in Keysville, Polk County, Florida, the son of James C. and Lola (Proctor) Ballard, both natives of Florida. When he was thirteen years old, the family moved to Fort Myers and he was graduated from Fort Myers high school in 1917.

Immediately after graduation, Mr. Ballard enlisted in the Navy. He served until December, 1918, serving most of the time as boarding officer at Tampa with the rank of chief petty officer.

Returning to Fort Myers, Mr. Ballard started truck farming on a small scale, raising peppers on a six-acre tract. The venture failed but he tried again the following year with another pepper crop and did better. Then he pioneered with Irish potatoes, planting ten acres. Everyone said he would lose heavily but the crop was a success and Mr. Ballard made history by shipping the first carload of potatoes out of South Florida.

In later years Mr. Ballard greatly increased his potato acreage, at one time planting 350 acres which had an average yield of 275 bushels per acre, and he became

known as the Potato King of South Florida. Because of a lack of barrels when he started, he shipped his potatoes in crates, thereby reviving the dormant crate industry.

Retiring in 1943, Mr. Ballard has spent much of his time in conservation work. He was one of the founders and is now president of the Caloosahatchee Conservation Club. In 1948 he took a leading part in the drive to have Lee County placed under fire control under the supervision of the State Forestry Department.

Mr. Ballard is a member of Tropical Lodge No. 56, F.&A.M., the Chamber of Commerce, and the First Baptist Church. Seeking to abolish the office of justice of the peace, Mr. Ballard in 1948 ran for the office and was elected. In the fall of 1948 he was persuaded by friends to run for city council, and was elected.

On September 28, 1931, Mr. Ballard was married to Virginia Hogshead, of Staunton, Va. They have two daughters: Katherine, born July 31, 1934, and Virginia, born December 7, 1939. By a previous marriage he has two other children: Walter L., now living in New York, and Jeanne, now Mrs. Horace Hinson, who is living in Gainesville.



ELMO M. BALLARD

### GEORGE KINGSTON

George Kingston was born March 22, 1863, in Ionia, Mich., the son of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Kingston. After attending



GEORGE KINGSTON

Ionia public schools he learned the carpenter trade.

Mechanically minded, he took a keen interest in the first automobiles which were manufactured. Studying the mechanism closely, he concluded that the fuel mixing valves then used did not have sufficient flexibility to make automobiles practicable and, after long experimenting, developed a mixing device later called the carburetor.

In the beginning he made his own drawings for the carburetor, made his own patterns, and machined and assembled the castings. His device was first used on an automobile in 1900. Shortly afterward, Henry Ford saw his carburetor at a New York auto show, decided he wanted it, and made arrangements with Mr. Kingston to produce it. A Kingston carburetor was used on Ford's first experimental car and also for all his first production cars.

To produce carburetors on a quantity basis, Mr. Kingston founded and headed the Byrne-Kingston Company, the Kokoma Brass Works, and the Kokomo Electrical Company, all of Kokomo, Ind. More than half of all the millions of carburetors used on Ford's Model T cars were produced in his plants. Mr. Kingston's companies also produced ignition systems, spark plugs, magneto's and other automobile parts.

In 1928 Mr. Kingston retired and sold all his manufacturing interests, his plants being

merged to form the Kingston Products Company.

Mr. Kingston first came to Fort Myers for a winter vacation late in 1910. He purchased a boat here and then spent the remainder of the winter fishing and hunting in the Everglades. He continued to winter at Everglades until 1919 when he remained all winter in Fort Myers, in the old Walter Langford home at First and Woodford which he had bought two years before. During 1919 he also purchased the old Towles Grove east of Tice, which had forty acres in bearing trees. Later he bought adjoining land and enlarged the grove to 154 acres. He also purchased the 100-acre Dr. Miles Grove at Olga, the 90-acre Harris Grove at Buckingham, and 350 acres of the Fort Myers Grove Company grove south of Fort Myers. In 1931 he purchased the packing house of the Fort Myers Co-operative.

During the following decade he developed these holdings, becoming the largest citrus producer in the county. In 1943 he sold all the properties to Foundation Groves, Inc.

While in Fort Myers, Mr. Kingston devoted much of his time to his favorite hobbies—photography, radio and gardening—and to beautifying the grounds of his second Fort Myers home, on the southwest corner of First and Fowler, which he purchased in 1925 from the Walter Langford estate.



WILLIAM H. REYNOLDS

Mr. Kingston was married in 1903 to Mina Vincent, of Ovid, Mich. They had one child, Ralph G. Mr. Kingston died February 21, 1946, and Mrs. Kingston July 11, 1948.

Ralph Kingston was graduated from Fort Myers high school and later worked seven years in the experimental department of his father's plant at Kokomo. Returning to Fort Myers, he then assisted his father in his various undertakings until early 1942 when he began serving as a flight instructor at the Army primary training school at Carlstrom Field. He continued to serve until late 1944.

Mr. Kingston is president of the First National Bank and a partner of Billy Wiggins in the Wiggins & Kingston Motors. He is a member of the Elks Lodge and the Chamber of Commerce.

On December 15, 1927, Mr. Kingston was married to Evelyn McKillip, of Marion, Ind. They have two children: Ralph G., Jr., born October 21, 1929, now a sophomore at Stetson University, and Mino Rose, born September 3, 1932, now a junior at Fort Myers High School.

#### WILLIAM H. REYNOLDS

William H. Reynolds was born June 22, 1882, on a farm near Villisca, Ia., the son of William H. and Josephine (Pasko) Reynolds. After being graduated from high school he went to Wyoming where he stayed a year, working on ranches and teaching school.

Returning to Iowa, Mr. Reynolds attended Simpson College, in Indianola. After being graduated in 1906 he studied law at the University of Nebraska, receiving his LL.B. degree in 1909. During his vacations he traveled through the West, selling school supplies, and when he finished his studies at the university he continued working for his company for another year.

In 1910 Mr. Reynolds entered the real estate business in the Dakotas, specializing in the sale of farm lands. He came to Fort Myers on January 1, 1911, and sold real estate until 1918. He then went West again and for five years was engaged in the real estate business in Burlington, Col.

Coming back to Fort Myers in the fall of 1924, when the boom was nearing its peak, he again entered the real estate business and has been engaged in it ever since. From 1930 to 1945 he also handled municipal bonds. For many years he has been interested in farm properties and in 1948 was part owner of 5,000 acres in the Lake Okeechobee area, 2,600 acres of which were under cultivation.

Mr. Reynolds twice served as president of the Chamber of Commerce, first in 1931-32 and again in 1942-43. He is a member

of the Rotary Club and an elder in the Presbyterian Church. In 1945 he was elected to city council and served one term.

On December 18, 1919, Mr. Reynolds was married to Anna Piffer, of Indianola, a graduate of Simpson College. They have three children: William H., Jr., who was graduated from the University of Florida in 1942 and is now associated with his father in the real estate business; Esther Ann, who studied at Duke University, and Mary Joe, who in 1948 was in her senior year at Duke.

### PETER TONNELIER

Peter Tonnelier was born in Decatur, Ind., September 30, 1861, the son of John and Susan Tonnelier. After attending college in Indiana, he went to Benton Harbor, Mich., where he established a chain of drug stores. He later acquired many business properties and became an officer of the Michigan State Bank in Benton Harbor.

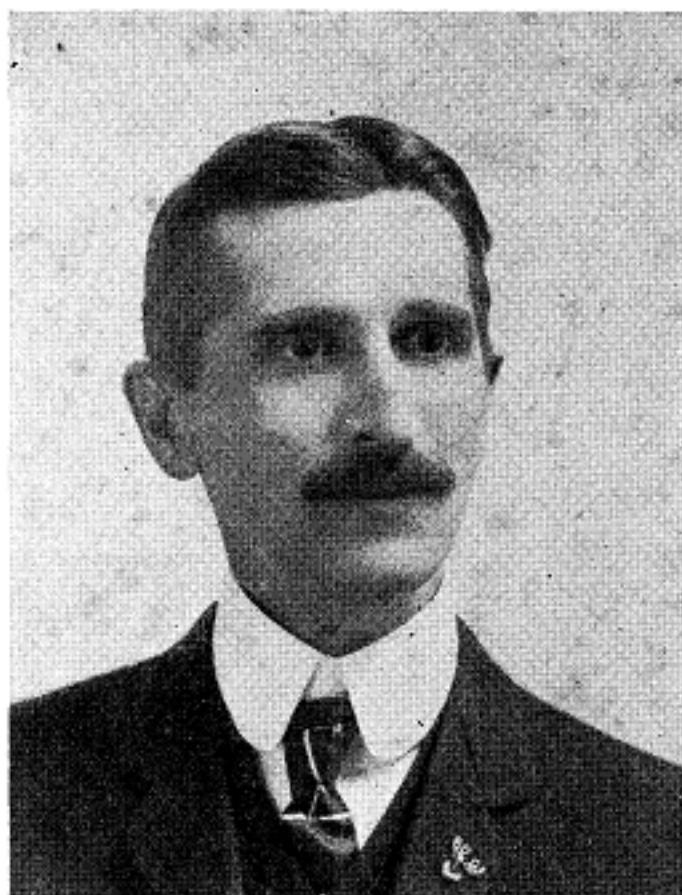
He was married on November 2, 1892, to Alice Brandenburg, daughter of Alfred and Mary Brandenburg, of Louisville, Ky.

In 1910, Mr. Tonnelier sold his business interests in Michigan and came to Florida, first wintering in St. Petersburg. The following year he stayed in Sarasota. In both cities he purchased business properties. In February, 1912, he visited Fort Myers for the first time while cruising down the coast with his brother Henry. He liked the town and soon purchased the Stone Block at First and Hendry from Dr. B. P. Matheson, paying \$150,000 for the property. He later purchased many other business sites and erected many buildings in the downtown section, including buildings in the court now known as the Patio de Leon and four hotels. (See Chapter VI.)

When Mr. Tonnelier came to Fort Myers the section between Hendry and Monroe consisted mostly of ramshackle wooden buildings. He did much to change the appearance of this part of the business section. Just before World War I he built the Kenmore Hotel and in 1922 the Grand Central. He donated land needed for the opening of Main Street (formerly called Oak) from Hendry to Jackson. He was the builder of the Ritz Theatre which he leased to Central Theatres, Inc., of Jacksonville.

Mr. Tonnelier was a member of St. Francis (Xavier) Catholic Church and the Elks Lodge.

He died September 14, 1932. He was survived by his widow and four brothers and four sisters: Henry R., Edward and Victor T., of Benton Harbor, Mich.; Charles, of Charlevoix, Mich.; Mrs. Edward Dwan, of Benton Harbor; Mrs. Margaret Garvey, of Fort Myers; Mrs. May McFarlan, of Portland, Ore., and Emelia Tonnelier, of Decatur, Mich.



PETER TONNELIER

### LUCIUS CURRIAN CURTRIGHT

Lucius Currian Curtright was born November 14, 1891, in Apelika, Ala., the son of William Henry and Annie (Bryan) Curtright, both natives of Columbus, Ga., who had gone to Alabama to make their home.

Mr. Curtright attended public and private schools in Alabama. He then went to Tampa and opened a small moving picture theatre which he sold the following year. Returning to Alabama he entered the real estate and insurance business in Birmingham with W. N. Malone & Company.

In 1912, Mr. Curtright came to Fort Myers to accompany his brother Samuel who was ill. Liking the city, he formed a connection with the Mutual Realty Company, then headed by Harvie E. Heitman, John M. Dean, and Frank C. Alderman, Sr., opening an insurance branch for the concern. In 1915 he returned to Birmingham and went into the real estate and insurance business for himself. In 1918 he enlisted in the army and served about one year.

On March 18, 1919, Mr. Curtright was married to Jessie Blanche Bonner, of Birmingham. Shortly after his marriage he went to Mulberry, Fla., to become sales manager of the Mine and Mill Supply Company where he remained until September, 1921. He then came back to Fort Myers and

organized the Fort Myers Realty Company which he has served as president ever since.

In 1922 his concern erected the two-story office building at First and Dean, in 1925 a two-story building at First and Bayview Court, formerly occupied by the Florida Power & Light Company, and in 1927 the three-story Kress Building at First and Broadway. During the 1920's Mr. Curtright took an active part in the construction of the Morgan Hotel, the opening of Broadway, and in the development of Seminole Park and York Manor. He was closely associated with G. R. Sims, of Ann Arbor, Mich., in all the latter's activities in the Broadway section. (See Chapter VII.)

Mr. Curtright is the president of Bayside Development Company which during World War II constructed thirty-two concrete block houses in the Bayside section, the development costing \$200,000. He is also president of Real Estate Investment Company with extensive holdings in Fort Lauderdale, and president of the Flany Building Corporation with holdings in Florida and Texas.

Mr. Curtright has been active in the Chamber of Commerce for many years. He is a director of the Lee County Packing Company and former director of the Morris Plan Bank. He is a past president of the Fort Myers Board of Underwriters, a member of the American Legion, and a charter member of the Elks Lodge.

#### VIRGIL CARLISLE ROBB

Virgil Carlisle Robb was born June 20, 1889, in Mayslick, Ky., the son of Brig. General William H. Robb, one of Morgan's Men in the Confederate Army, and Mrs. Anna E. (Willett) Robb. He was educated at Millersburg Military Institute, in Millersburg, Ky., and Georgetown College, at Georgetown, Ky.

Mr. Robb came to Fort Myers in 1912, when he was twenty-three years old, to clerk in the post office under Postmaster I. E. Foxworthy. Soon afterward he resigned to accept a position with Mr. Foxworthy in the Foxworthy Clothing Company.

In 1915 Mr. Robb organized and ran the Lee & Robb Furniture Company which later became the Robb-Stucky Company. The original location was on Main Street at Tonnelier Court. In 1925 the business was moved to the newly erected Robb-Stucky Building on Hendry Street which it still owns and occupies.

In addition to being president of Robb-Stucky Company, Mr. Robb is president of the Hendry Street Realty Company, director

and vice-president of the Fort Myers Southern Railroad, and had a partnership in the McNulty Robb Cigar Factory. He is a former director of the First National Bank and a former director and stockholder of the Tropical News.

Mr. Robb has taken an active part in civic affairs for many years. He was one of the organizers of the Committee of Twelve which raised the money to build Road No. 2, the first hard-surfaced road to the north. He was a charter member of the Accelerator Club. He served as trustee of the Fort Myers School and as a result of his friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A. Edison the famous inventor presented diplomas to the graduation class of 1929.

For more than twenty years Mr. Robb served as secretary-treasurer of the Lee Memorial Hospital. During this period the hospital was expanded from the small wooden structure on Victoria Street to the present fireproof building on Cleveland Avenue and the new Jones Walker Annex for colored people was built on Blount Street. At present Mr. Robb is vice-president and member of the hospital's executive and finance committee.

Mr. Robb was elected to city council in 1919 and made chairman of the finance committee. Later he was elected president of the council. At that time the first audit of the City of Fort Myers was made and the first hard-surfaced streets were constructed, except for one block of Second Street between Royal Palm and Fowler built earlier by William H. Towles.

One of the leaders in the movement to establish a commission form of government for Fort Myers, Mr. Robb was elected in 1921 to serve as one of the first commissioners and was named the first mayor-commissioner. He also served as commissioner of finance. In 1929, when the city went back to the councilmanic form of government, Mr. Robb was elected to serve on the council.

Mr. Robb is a member and former trustee of the Presbyterian Church, a Mason, and a past exalted ruler of the Elks Lodge. He is a director of the Executive Club, a former director of the Florida Furniture Association, and a former member of the Rotary Club. He is now a member of the National Furniture Association, Fort Myers Merchant Association and Chamber of Commerce.

On March 7, 1916, Mr. Robb was married to Ellen Fitzgerald Shanklin, daughter of Samuel Albert and Anna E. (Piper) Shanklin.

### WALTER P. FRANKLIN

Walter P. Franklin was born on a plantation in Halifax County, Virginia, near South Boston, June 4, 1871, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Franklin. He attended a private school close to South Boston and Elon College, in North Carolina.

When a young man, Mr. Franklin acquired experience in lumbering in southern states and in 1900 came to Florida and set up a saw mill at St. Catherine to cut timber. Closing this business late in 1903 he became a travelling salesman for the Knight & Wall Company, of Tampa, selling hardware. While on one of his trips for this company Mr. Franklin first came to Fort Myers in 1904.

Mr. Franklin became a salesman for the Georgia Supply Company in 1910 and remained with that concern three years. In 1913 he returned to Fort Myers and learned that C. W. Carleton's hardware store, then owned by Knight & Wall, was for sale. He acquired the business November 15, 1913, changed its name to the Franklin Hardware Company, and has operated it ever since. The concern was first located on the northeast corner of First and Hendry, moved to the Miller Building in 1931 and to its present location, owned by Mr. Franklin, in 1937.

In 1918 Mr. Franklin purchased the Hill House from Miss M. Flossie Hill, and renamed it the Franklin Arms. Five years later he built an 84-room addition to the hotel at a cost of more than \$300,000 and operated it until 1928.

Ever since coming to Fort Myers Mr. Franklin has taken an unusually active part in civic and community affairs. He served as mayor of the city in 1917 and 1918 and was president of the Board of Trade several years. He was treasurer of the Florida First Commission, one of the first organizations formed to boost Florida throughout the nation. He is a former member of the School Board, a member of the Masonic and Elks lodges, and a steward and member of the finance committee of the First Methodist Church.

Mr. Franklin is credited with having been a leading factor in the completion of the cross-state waterway. He became president of the Gulf, Okeechobee and Atlantic Waterway Association when it was organized and it was largely through his efforts that the necessary surveys were made and the project started in 1932 after a bill carrying \$9,000,000 was signed by President Hoover. Since then approximately \$23,000,000 has been spent on the waterways and levees around Lake Okeechobee.



WALTER P. FRANKLIN

In 1896 Mr. Franklin was married to Miss Joe Trueheart Johnson, of Jackson, Tenn. They have a son, Paul Grey Franklin, born September 28, 1897.

On June 18, 1924, Paul Franklin was married to Harriette Crane, of Daytona Beach. He is secretary-treasurer of the Franklin Hardware Company, a past president of the Merchants Association, has been director of the Chamber of Commerce for a number of years, is a former steward of the First Methodist Church, and is a member of the Rotary Club and the Elks Lodge.

### HAROLD C. SATCHELL

Harold C. Satchell was born August 21, 1895, in Kalamazoo, Mich., the son of Charles H. and Carrie (Guessling) Satchell, both natives of Missouri.

When a youth, Mr. Satchell started in the dry cleaning business, working with his father who owned a plant in St. Louis. In 1914 he came to Fort Myers and joined his brother Edward who was working at Charles Blount's Royal Dry Cleaning Company. Together they purchased the concern, located in the Patio de Leon. Shortly afterward they moved the plant to First Street opposite Cottage Home, where the Morgan Hotel now stands.

In 1919 Mr. Satchell bought out his brother and two years later branched into the laundry business, changing the name of the concern to Satchell's Laundry and Dry Cleaning Company. The concern is now located in a modern plant at 1001 Cleveland Avenue.

Mr. Satchell is a member of the Kiwanis Club, Chamber of Commerce, Fort Myers Golf & Country Club, and the National, Tri-State and Florida laundry associations.

On December 17, 1917, Mr. Satchell was married to Betty Readlean, of St. Louis. They have three children: Audrey Louise, now Mrs. David Howell; Betty Jean, now Mrs. Bonny Graham, and Harold C., Jr., who is married to Maxine Davis. They also have three grandchildren: Charleen and Vic Graham and Kemberly Howell.



HAROLD C. SATCHELL

F. Ewing (Unk) Starnes was born June 6, 1905, in Mt. Pleasant, Tex., the son of F. E. and Annie (Rogers) Starnes. His mother died in 1914 and shortly afterward his father, a Baptist minister, retired and came to Fort Myers where a son, C. L. Starnes, had entered the mercantile business some years before.

Ewing Starnes attended public schools in Texas and in Fort Myers. After being graduated from Fort Myers High School in



F. EWING (UNK) STARNES

1924 he went into the dry cleaning business, forming the Fort Myers Dry Cleaning Company. During the following year he sold a half interest in the concern to Frank A. Prather and in 1926 his remaining interest.

Deciding to become an attorney, Mr. Starnes took a two-year pre-law course at Rollins College and completed his education at the University of Florida from which he received an LL.B. degree in 1931. He then joined the law firm of Henderson & Franklin in which he became a partner in January, 1944, the firm name then being changed to Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt. He has practiced with the firm ever since.

As an avocation, Mr. Starnes has a cattle ranch southeast of Fort Myers.

Mr. Starnes is a member of the First Baptist Church, a past president of the Kiwanis Club, a member of Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity, and of the Lee County, Florida and American bar associations.

On June 6, 1935, he was married to Hazel Lamar, daughter of Hugh and Marie (Johnson) Lamar. They have three children: Marjorie, born February 5, 1938; Hugh, born September 25, 1940, and Susan, born June 4, 1944. By a previous marriage Mrs. Starnes has two children: Hazel Clarkson, a senior in 1948 at the Florida State College, and Julian (Bubsie) Clarkson, a junior in 1948 at the University of Florida.

## THOMAS MacFARLANE BIGGAR

Thomas MacFarlane Biggar was born in Scotland July 26, 1892, the son of John Wilson and Jessie (Macrae) Biggar. He was educated in Scotland and when nineteen years old went to Canada where he served the Union Bank of Canada in a number of branches in mid-western provinces.

In 1913 he was persuaded by his brother John W. Biggar, who had located in Tampa, to come to Florida. Arriving in Tampa, he was employed by the Citizens Bank & Trust Company. Later he was sent to Fort Myers by John W. Trice, then president of the Tampa bank, to work in the Bank of Fort Myers, in which Mr. Trice was one of the principal stockholders.

Mr. Biggar left the bank in 1918 to join the armed services as an aerial photographer. While at Madison Barracks in New York state he took out naturalization papers. Shortly afterwards he was sent overseas.

Returning to Fort Myers after the war, Mr. Biggar was employed as office manager for the Fort Myers Grove Company. While with this concern he homesteaded a tract of land near where Page Field now is. During the boom he sold this tract and invested in other property.

Early in 1922 Mr. Biggar started truck farming and soon afterward bought an interest in the Gorton-Padgett Co., owners of a vegetable packing plant, the concern then becoming the Biggar & Padgett Co. Later he bought out Mr. Padgett and the company name was changed to Biggar & Biggar, Inc.

Mr. Biggar expanded his operations steadily. To secure more produce, he financed share croppers in various parts of the county. Later, however, he concentrated on farming his own land, greatly increasing the acreage under cultivation and becoming one of the biggest shippers in southwest Florida.

He pioneered in a number of things which have since become common practice among large-scale farmers in southwest Florida such as the general use of the labor-saving machinery, tractor farming and tiled land. His firm shipped the first carload of Marglobe tomatoes and the first of Bliss potatoes. He is credited with having grown the first commercial gladioli in the Iona section.

Mr. Biggar served as the first secretary-treasurer of the Lee County Bank.

Since coming to Fort Myers Mr. Biggar has taken an active part in community affairs. He helped to promote the first bridge across the river at Fort Myers and, with Gilmer Heitman, Jr., promoted the Lee County airport now known as Page Field. He was a director and then chairman of the Iona drainage district and helped secure the



THOMAS MacFARLANE BIGGAR

beach cut-off road. He was one of the leading boosters of the Tamiami Trail and other improved highways. He spent one summer getting the cooperation of McGregor Boulevard property owners in the program of planting royal palms five miles west of Manuel's Branch. More recently he served on the zoning commission.

In August, 1945, Mr. Biggar purchased the Henry Ford property just east of the Edison estate as a home for his family.

He is a member of the Christian Science Church, the Rotary Club, the Fort Myers Yacht Club, and the Men's Garden Club. An ardent golfer, he holds several Scottish awards.

Mr. Biggar was married August 9, 1930, to Gladys Jacobs, of Oxford, O. They have four sons: Thomas M., Jr., born November 30, 1933; Malcolm, born August 31, 1935; Gordon, born April 15, 1937, and Douglas, born May 11, 1942.

## T. H. (TOM) PHILLIPS

T. H. (Tom) Phillips was born February 16, 1887, in Pocomoke City, Md., the son of Thomas H. and Estelle (Lankford) Phillips, both natives of Maryland.

He attended schools in Pocomoke City until he was thirteen years old and then started working in a brush factory in Baltimore at \$2 a week. Two years later

he went to New York and started working in a machine shop. He soon began devising various forms of novelties and when 21 years old was granted his first patent.

In 1909, Mr. Phillips went into business for himself manufacturing novelties. Several years later he invented a new type of washing machine and moved his plant to Chicago to manufacture the machine, on which he had a basic patent. In 1913 he sold the patent to the Western Electric Company.

During World War I Mr. Phillips was granted a basic patent on a radio controlled aeroplane and for nearly two years was associated with the Sperry Gyroscope Company while his device was being perfected. One of the radio-controlled planes which were constructed made a successful 50-mile flight.

Late in 1918 Mr. Phillips came to Fort Myers, purchased a ten-acre tract on McGregor Boulevard and developed a subdivision. Two years later, with Harry Fielder, he built the first bath house and casino on Estero Island at what is now known as Fort Myers Beach and also developed a subdivision there. He also developed Henley Circle and Palm Gardens.

During the boom Mr. Phillips organized the San Carlos Corporation, a \$1,750,000 development company in which all the stock was sold. He also promoted the Tamiami

City Corporation, a \$2,050,000 development company which owned 13,600 acres on the Trail north of the river. The company built twenty houses, a large garage and a pavilion—and then development work was stopped by the 1926 hurricane and the ending of the Florida boom.

Inactive during the depression, Mr. Phillips resumed operations in 1938 when he got a contract for selling a 35-acre tract north of the river. He developed Cabana City and built, and sold, the tourist cabins now known as Lakeside Cabins. Later he bought 708 lots which the city had taken in for delinquent taxes, paying \$6500 cash. Since then practically all the lots have been sold. He also developed the artificial lake and rock cabins near the radio station.

On October 13, 1947, he bought the famous old Royal Palm Hotel from the Dr. M. O. Terry estate, paying \$105,000. He then proceeded to tear down the hotel, which had been condemned, preparatory to selling the land as business sites. He sold the annex to the Brooks-Garrison Corporation, which continued to operate it as a hotel.

On April 1, 1948, Mr. Phillips purchased 110 acres at the north end of Fort Myers Beach from the Collier Corporation for \$125,000 and soon afterward started development work. The tract has been described as the most attractive undeveloped property on the entire Gulf Coast.

Mr. Phillips late in 1948 was planning to develop a 2,500-acre tract he owns on the north Tamiami Trail, a 4,000-acre tract on Pine Island and a 400-acre tract on Sanibel. He also was building a novel rock office on First Street near the post office.



NELSON THOMAS BURROUGHS

#### NELSON THOMAS BURROUGHS

Nelson Thomas Burroughs was born on a farm near Tecumseh Mich., June 28, 1839, the son of Noah S. and Electra (Hunter) Burroughs, natives of Seneca County, New York, where the father was a farmer.

After attending school in Tecumseh, Mr. Burroughs went to Cleveland and lived a year with his uncle, Jeptha Wade, who later gave Wade Park to Cleveland. Early in the Civil War, he enlisted in a cavalry unit, was soon wounded and honorably discharged. He then returned to Michigan where he taught school three winters and also farmed.

In 1865 Mr. Burroughs drove 3,000 head of sheep from Michigan to Story County, Iowa, making the long journey in a horse and buggy and accompanied only by one man and a sheep dog. Later he acquired a

large tract near Cherokee, Iowa, and engaged in stock-raising on an extensive scale.

On September 12, 1871, Mr. Burroughs was married to Adeline Hill Phipps, daughter of Albert and Martha Phipps, pioneers of Cherokee who had gone west from Medford, Mass.

Later in the 1870's he became engaged in banking in Cherokee and in 1881 founded the First National Bank of Cherokee, becoming its president. During the years which followed Mr. Burroughs became one of the leading land owners in Iowa. He also bought large tracts in the Mississippi delta, which were later developed into one of the finest growing sections in the country, and large tracts of timber land.

In 1903 Mr. Burroughs moved to Chicago to be near his son, Roy, who had established a machinery factory in Elgin, and to have a more central location for his far-flung business activities.

In 1904 he acquired a summer home in Gloucester County, Virginia, buying the famous Warner Hall, the first buildings of which were constructed in 1620 with bricks brought from England. The great-great grandparents of George Washington were buried on the estate.

Mr. and Mrs. Burroughs spent the winter of 1915-16 in Palm Beach. In the following fall he went to Kissimmee and bought acreage which he sold in a few days at a good profit. Deciding that Florida was a good place to make investments he then bought many other properties. The family came to Fort Myers late in 1918 and Mr. Burroughs bought the Murphy home, then owned by Howard Cole, where he spent each winter until his death on September 16, 1932. Mrs. Burroughs died on December 23 of the same year in Fort Myers.

Mr. and Mrs. Burroughs had two sons, Roy and Raynor, both now deceased, and two daughters, Jettie and Mona.

Jettie Burroughs has been active in garden club and community work in Fort Myers. She served four years as president of the Periwinkle Garden Group which took a leading part in the beautification of the city. She was chairman of nine of the Garden Tours held annually until World War II. More than six hundred persons who attended the last tour were entertained at the Burroughs home in a garden party. Miss Burroughs also has served as a trustee in the Community Congregational Church, in which she is an active member, and has been a member of the Community Club.

Mona Burroughs is now married to John McCurdy and divides her time between Florida and the North.



WALTER J. EDELBLUT

#### WALTER JOSEPH EDELBLUT

Walter Joseph Edelblut was born March 6, 1895, in Richmond, Va., the son of Andrew and Wilhelmina (Beckman) Edelblut. Members of his father's family came to America in Colonial days.

Mr. Edelblut was educated in public and parochial schools of Richmond and in 1914 was graduated from the Virginia Mechanical Institute, in Richmond. He learned the plumbing trade while working for his brother, a Richmond plumbing contractor. In February, 1919, he came to Fort Myers and went into business for himself, retail and wholesale.

In 1941 Mr. Edelblut organized the Edelblut Construction Company which during an eight-month period constructed \$1,500,000 worth of army camps for the government at Fort Myers, Key West, Sarasota, and MacDill Field at Tampa. The projects included the construction of 135 buildings. Since the war the company has handled many contracts for the federal government and also for Florida cities, as well as commercial buildings and residences.

Mr. Edelblut is a life member of the Elks Lodge and a member of the Chamber of Commerce.

On November 29, 1916, he was married to Mary Almy Pumphrey, of Washington, D. C. They have five children: Walter Joseph, Jr.,

born August 5, 1920; Robert Llewelyn, born December 5, 1922; Mary Eileen, born April 28, 1925; Ada Louise, now Mrs. Walter Shiver, born January 10, 1927, and Richard Thomas, born July 5, 1928. Walter and Robert are graduates of Georgia Tech and are now in active charge of the Edelblut Construction Company. Walter served as a captain in the Engineer Corps in World War II and Robert as a lieutenant in the Air Corps.

#### LEO W. ENGLEHARDT

Leo W. Englehardt was born December 25, 1914, at Conway Springs, Kansas, the son of Louis W. and Bessie (Thompson) Englehardt.

Louis W. Englehardt, who was born in Waterloo, Ia. on October 12, 1876 came to Fort Myers in 1919 and established a funeral home on Hendry Street which was moved in 1933 to its present location on McGregor Boulevard. He died March 22, 1935, and was survived by his widow, a daughter, Eunice K., and three sons, Paul, Leo W., and Charles Edward.

After Leo was graduated from Fort Myers High School in 1933 he went into the undertaking business with his father. At that time James C. Spooner became a partner in the firm. He remained a partner until 1946 when his interest was purchased by Mr. Englehardt, who now operates the business himself.



LEO W. ENGLEHARDT

Mr. Englehardt is a member of the Masonic, I.O.O.F. and Elks lodges, the Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, and the Fort Myers Golf Club.

He was married on March 10, 1940, to Alma Crews, of Fort Myers. They have two daughters: Beverly, born January 16, 1941, and Susan, born April 29, 1946.

#### LAWRENCE A. POWELL

Lawrence A. Powell was born August 6, 1893, in Atlanta, Ga., the son of Frank A. and Helena (Hookey) Powell, both natives of Georgia. Educated in Atlanta public schools, he went to work in 1908 for the Atlanta undertaking firm of Greenburg, Bond & Bloomfield.

Later moving to Macon, Mr. Powell was associated for several years with the undertaking firm of Jessie Hart & Company and then joined the Orleans Manufacturing Company, a casket concern.

Coming to Fort Myers in 1920, Mr. Powell established the undertaking firm of Lawrence A. Powell, Inc., which he operated until August 1, 1948, when he sold to Howard McQueen. He then started construction of a modern cafeteria on the southwest corner of Royal Palm and First Street which he leased to Edison Cafeteria, Inc. His brother, Marion Powell, who had been associated with him in the undertaking firm, has an interest in the cafeteria building, erected at a cost of \$52,000.

Mr. Powell is a member of the Elks, Masons, Odd Fellows, Woodmen of the World, and the Chamber of Commerce.

In January, 1914, Mr. Powell was married to Ruth Smith, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. M. D. Smith, of Atlanta. They have three children: Helene Ruth Duval, Wilson and Emmie Lee.

#### DR. CHARLES E. CONGDON

Dr. Charles Ellsworth Congdon was born August 15, 1862, in Buffalo, N. Y., the son of Ira W. and Lavenia (Smith) Congdon.

After being graduated from Niagara University, in Buffalo, where he studied medicine, he took post-graduate courses in surgery at the University of Berlin, Germany.

Returning to New York, Dr. Congdon opened an office in Buffalo. He became one of the leading surgeons of the state and in 1896 established the City Hospital for Women, in Buffalo, specializing in gynecological and obstetrical cases. He was the author of a number of treatises which were published by the American Journal of Obstetrics.

In 1917 Dr. Congdon was commissioned as a major in the Army Medical Corps and served throughout the war.

Dr. Congdon came to Fort Myers for the first time in 1920 and liked it better than he did the Isle of Pines where he had previously wintered. In 1923 he purchased land and built a home in Alva and during the following year invested heavily in Fort Myers properties.

Although Dr. Congdon retired from active practice in 1924 he often assisted other physicians and surgeons and he spent much money and time in an effort to have a health center established in Fort Myers. This health center probably would have become a reality had it not been for Florida's super-stringent laws drafted to keep out physicians from other states.

Dr. Congdon's principal hobby was poultry raising and he took an active part in the movement which led to the passage by the state legislature of laws regulating the size and quality of eggs handled by produce dealers.

Dr. Congdon was married in June, 1910, to Mable R. Mitchell. They had two children: Livonia and James Mitchell. Dr. Congdon died March 2, 1940.

James M. Congdon was married on June 22, 1942, to Lois Roberta Alexander. They have a son, Frederick James, born November 1, 1946.



DR. CHARLES E. CONGDON



R. Q. RICHARDS

#### RICHARD QUINTUS RICHARDS

Richard Quintus Richards was born December 1, 1892, in Sandersville, Ga., the son of Quintus and Florence (Dickinson) Richards, descendants of families which came to America in Colonial days. Both were natives of Virginia and the father served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War.

After being graduated from high school in Sandersville, Mr. Richards worked in drug stores and learned to be a pharmacist. He passed the Georgia state board in 1909 and soon afterward came to Florida. He worked for nearly four years in drug stores in Mulberry and Nichols. In September, 1913, he went to Atlanta where he studied medicine for two years at Emory University, at the same time teaching *materia medica* to other students.

Upon completion of his second year at Emory, Mr. Richards went to Lakeland where he and his brother, Dr. H. Mercer Richards, operated the City Drug Store until January 1, 1920. He then sold his interest in the store to his brother and came to Fort Myers where on May 1, 1920, he opened the Royal Palm Pharmacy in the same location it is at present.

In April, 1945, Mr. Richards purchased the Pythian Building, built in 1923 by A. A. Gardner, changed its name to the Richards Professional Building, and soon afterward

opened Richards Prescriptions, a strictly professional drug store with a clinical laboratory.

On April 28, 1922, Mr. Richards organized the Kiwanis Club, signing up all the charter members in one day. He served two years as president of the club. While chairman of the club's baseball committee he helped persuade Connie Mack to bring his Philadelphia Athletics to Fort Myers for spring training for twelve years. The contract, made with the Kiwanis Club, was signed January 26, 1924, and the Athletics trained here every spring through 1936.

Mr. Richards is a past president of the Chamber of Commerce, a steward of the First Methodist Church, and a member of the Masonic Lodge and Shrine. He is a past president and secretary since 1940 of the Florida State Pharmaceutical Association and editor since 1938 of the Florida State Pharmaceutical Journal; a past president and now chairman of the executive committee of the National Association Boards of Pharmacy, and has been secretary of the Board of Pharmacy of the State of Florida since January, 1941. He is a member of the Society of Sons of the American Revolution by descent from Christian Streit.

On November 9, 1914, Mr. Richards was married to Hazel Larmon, of Bowling Green, Ky. They have three sons: Richard Q., Jr., born October 23, 1915; Hugh Larmon, born January 17, 1918, and Joe Murrey, born

November 25, 1923. On August 31, 1937, Richard Q., Jr., was married to Mary Grey Dickinson. They have three children: Sue Larmon, Richard Q., III, and Lindsay Mercer. Hugh was married on September 2, 1940, to Eugenia Dickinson; they have two children: Hugh Larmon, Jr., and Frank Conley. On March 30, 1947, Joe was married to Margaret Addison; they have a daughter, Hazell Sheridan.

Richard, Jr., and Joe are graduates in pharmacy of the University of Florida and operate the Richards Prescriptions; Hugh is associated with his father at the Royal Palm Pharmacy.

#### JULIUS CARL McDONALD

Julius Carl McDonald was born December 1, 1892, in Dahlonega, Ga., the son of William Edgar and Cynthia (Jones) McDonald, both natives of Georgia. He was educated in the public schools of Dahlonega and Douglas, Ga., and when a youth served his apprenticeship as a mason. Later he studied architecture and engineering.

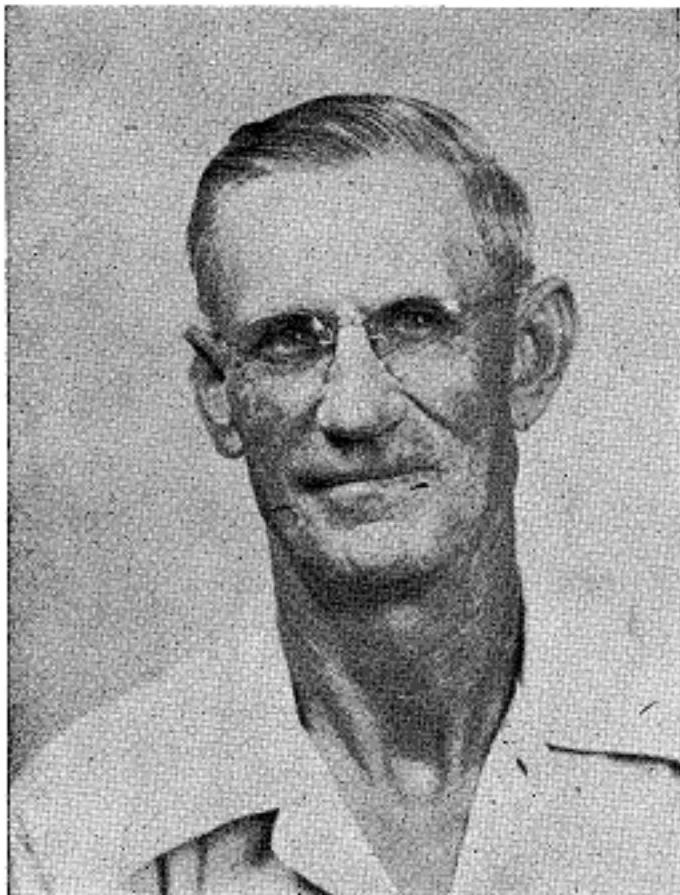
During World War I Mr. McDonald served in the infantry and in the Military Intelligence Corps, in which he attained the rank of lieutenant. When the war ended, Mr. McDonald returned to Douglas, where he had been working, and resumed business as a contractor.

In February, 1920, Mr. McDonald came to Fort Myers, just as the building boom was getting under way. One of his first sub-contracts was for the construction of Frank C. Alderman's home. Later he had contracts or sub-contracts for the Morgan Hotel, McCrory's Building, rebuilding of the Leon Hotel, Franklin Arms Hotel, Odom Building, Stadler Mansion, the Elks home, and many other structures.

In recent years Mr. McDonald has developed many residential sections and built numerous houses. During World War II he served three years in the corps of engineers in the Civil Service and was stationed at Buckingham, Orlando, Page Field and Marco.

Mr. McDonald is a member of the Elks Lodge, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Fort Myers Contractors Association.

On June 30, 1943, Mr. McDonald was married to Velma C. Cannon. They have a son, Julius Carl, Jr., born December 15, 1944. By a former marriage, Mr. McDonald has six children: Walter E., Sidney J., Marvel Grace, who was graduated from Fort Myers High and later attended college in Dahlonega; Cynthia Ann, now Mrs. B. Dudley Hill; Carline May, now Mrs. Lyle Wilkins, and Katherine Grace, now Mrs. Hall McGrath.



J. C. McDONALD

## JOSEPH A. ANSLEY

Joseph A. Ansley was born February 24, 1906, in Americus, Ga., the son of Joseph A. and Jessie (Whitaker) Ansley, both natives of Georgia. He came to Fort Myers with his family in 1922 when his father, a Baptist minister, was named pastor of the First Baptist Church.

After being graduated from the Fort Myers High School in 1924, Mr. Ansley attended Stetson University and then started to work in the advertising department of the Fort Myers Tropical News. He was advertising manager of the News when it was merged with the Fort Myers Press in 1931 and retained that position on the News-Press.

In August, 1942, he joined the United States Navy as a chief petty officer and served until October, 1945. After being released from service he went with the Lee County Bank as public relations officer, which position he still holds, as well as being assistant cashier.

Mr. Ansley played a leading part in promoting the first Pageant of Light, in 1938, and served as chairman of the event. He has been active in the Junior Chamber of Commerce since its organization, is a past president of the Kiwanis Club and served as commander of the American Legion in 1947-48. In 1939 he was president of the



JOSEPH A. ANSLEY

Florida Newspaper Advertising Association. He is a member of the 40 & 8, Caloosahatchee Conservation Club, Chamber of Commerce, Fort Myers Country Club, and Tropical Lodge No. 56, F.&A.M.

On November 13, 1943, Mr. Ansley was married to Barbara H. Holmes, daughter of F. Irving and Edna (Dunlop) Holmes. Mrs. Ansley is a graduate of Fort Myers High School and the Florida State College for Women.



ELMER HOUGH

## ELMER HOUGH

Elmer Hough was born January 15, 1866, in Morgan County, Pennsylvania, the son of Jacob R. and Susan (Hough) Hough, both descendants of Richard Hough, a friend of Benjamin Franklin, who settled in Pennsylvania in 1683. He attended public schools and later sold books and taught mathematics to complete an engineering course at Ada University, in Ada, O.

Starting to work as a railroad construction engineer, Mr. Hough later was in charge of construction of the Monongahela blast furnaces at McKeesport, Pa., the Pennsylvania Glass Plant at Irwin, Pa., and from 1892-1898 was manager of the City of Homestead, Pa. For the next seven years he was assistant chief engineer of the Carnegie Steel Company and later was vice-president

and general manager of the Beech Bottom Coal Company, of Wellsburg, W. Va.

Mr. Hough was president of the Board of Trade at Wellsburg for five years and also president for three years of the Wellsburg Board of Education. From 1910-16 he was president of the West Virginia State Automobile Association. In 1916 he was elected state senator and during the next two years was active in promoting good roads and organizing a state police force.

Coming to Fort Myers with his family in 1923, Mr. Hough immediately began taking an active part in civic affairs. Working with committees of the Chamber of Commerce he aided in securing completion of the Tamiami Trail and Palm Beach Highway. He was particularly active in the cross-state waterway movement and helped obtain passage of legislation which ensured completion of the project. (See Index: Cross-State Waterway.)

He became mayor of Fort Myers in 1926 and served two terms.

On August 30, 1890, Mr. Hough was married to Florence Boltin. They had six sons: Victor B., born June 19, 1891; E. Byron, born August 21, 1893; Roscoe R., born January 29, 1895; Scott, born November 21, 1898; Wendell M., born June 10, 1903, and Nelson M., born June 3, 1905.

Mr. Hough died February 23, 1939.



SCOTT HOUGH

### SCOTT HOUGH

Scott Hough was born November 21, 1898, in Homestead, Pa., the son of Elmer and Florence (Boltin) Hough. After being graduated from high school in Wellsburg, W. Va., he enrolled at West Virginia University in Morgantown, W. Va. While attending the university he received an appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy and attended two years. He then returned to the university from which he was graduated in 1924 with an A.B. degree.

In 1920 Mr. Hough was champion 125-pound wrestler in the Navy, in 1921 he won the championship of the Indiana-Kentucky Association of the A.A.U. in the 125-pound class, and in 1924 the championship of the Allegheny Mountain Association in the same division. During the same year he coached the West Virginia University team and won a place on the U. S. Olympic wrestling team.

After being graduated from the university, Mr. Hough entered the real estate business in Detroit and in September, 1925, came to Fort Myers and became an insurance underwriter. He has been engaged in that business ever since.

In 1941 Mr. Hough was elected city councilman and was re-elected in 1943 and 1945. In 1946 he was elected state representative and was re-elected in 1948.

During the 1947 session of the State Legislature Mr. Hough fathered a bill requiring all life insurance agents to pass an examination, thereby giving them equal dignity with members of other professions. He also took the lead in passing a bill which exempted fraternal benefit societies from the two per cent state insurance tax.

Mr. Hough is a past exalted ruler of the Elks, a Mason, and a Kappa Alpha. His avocation has been skippering a Sea Scout troop.

On August 11, 1927, Mr. Hough was married to Hester Van Meter, of Martinsburg, W. Va. They have three children: Hester Van Meter, born May 16, 1930; Scott II, born August 7, 1932, and Van Quillian, born January 30, 1934.

### WENDELL M. HOUGH

Wendell M. Hough was born June 10, 1903, in Wellsburg, W. Va., the son of Elmer and Florence (Boltin) Hough. He was graduated from Wellsburg High School and later attended the University of West Virginia and the University of Florida.

While in high school he played football, baseball, basketball and track. In college he played football and basketball.

In 1925 he went into the automobile business in Fort Myers with his brother Victor, forming the Hough Chevrolet Company, locating in a new building at 910 Cleveland Avenue, built by his father, which was later used by the Glades Motor Line. Ten years later he secured the Dodge-Plymouth agency in St. Petersburg and formed Hough Motors which he sold in 1937 to his brother Roscoe.

Returning to Fort Myers, Mr. Hough took on the Willys-Nash line and specialized in the sale of used cars until 1939 when he acquired the Oldsmobile franchise. He has had the agency ever since, his concern being located at Bay and Hendry. He is known throughout the trading area as an authority on used car values.

Mr. Hough is a member of Kappa Alpha social fraternity, the Masonic and Elks lodges, and the Chamber of Commerce, and is now president of the Men's Garden Club.

On August 11, 1926, he was married to Jeannette Carmichael, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Emmett Carmichael of Wellsburg, W. Va. They have two children: Barbara Jean, born April 28, 1928, now a junior at the College of Wooster, in Wooster, O., from which Mrs. Hough was graduated, and Wendell M., Jr., born September 5, 1932, now a junior at Fort Myers High School.

#### MRS. SARA COLE DOUGLASS

Mrs. Sara Cole Douglass was born in Dearborn County, Indiana, the daughter of Eleazer and Eunice (North) Cole.

After graduation from Aurora, Ind., High School, she studied dramatic art in the Heath School of Dramatic Art and Music, in Cincinnati. She later took post graduate private instruction in dramatic art under Heath & Erwin and then taught school in Shawneetown, Ill., with classes in dramatic art in southern Illinois.

She was married in her home town, Aurora, Ind., to Dr. S. A. Douglass of Patriot, Ind. They had a son, Clive, deceased at 17, and a daughter, Furma, now Mrs. O. Edward DeWitt, of Tampa, where she is director of District 7, State Welfare Board of Florida.

Dr. and Mrs. Douglass lived in southern Alabama for a few years after which Mrs. Douglass, widowed, returned to Cincinnati and joined the faculty of Ohio Conservatory as head of the dramatic art department. Later she accepted a position as manager of four large piano stores with headquarters in Lima, O.

While in Lima Mrs. Douglass became one of the founding charter members of the first Business & Professional Women's Club in America, a year before the present national



WENDELL M. HOUGH

organization of that name was organized in St. Louis. The Lima club established and maintained a social work department for the counsel and protection of girls and young women. Mrs. Douglass was chosen to head the department and was given police powers.

Becoming deeply interested in social work, Mrs. Douglass decided to devote all her time to it. She enrolled in the New York School of Social Work and accepted a position as social worker for the Dutch Reformed Church of Fort Washington, New York City.

During World War I a group of prominent New York City women recognized the need for a women's police department and chose Mrs. Douglass to make the necessary demonstration. She was the first police-woman in New York City under the Fosdick Commission of the Mayor's Committee of Women, with all of Manhattan for her beat. She did undercover work in the protection of girls and, with a co-worker in Brooklyn, so well demonstrated the need for a woman's police department that the present efficient department was established.

When this was accomplished, Mrs. Douglass was appointed superintendent of Inwood House, a home for the care and training of New York City's delinquent and dependent girls. Her success there

brought an offer to join the staff of the Women's Protective Association of Cleveland where in cooperation with psychiatrists in the investigation and supervision of care and training of delinquent girls, such favorable results were gained as to win national attention.

Learning of Mrs. Douglass' record, Governor Kilby of Alabama requested that she become superintendent of the Alabama State Training School for Girls, near Birmingham, Ala., where he had just established a new cottage system plan for the care and training of delinquent and dependent girls. Mrs. Douglass instituted an honor system, secured instruction in music, art, business, and homemaking and the school became a model for similar institutions throughout the country.

Mrs. Douglass came to Fort Myers late in 1923 with her sister, Dr. Florence D. Champlin, a dentist, and her husband, Dr. H. D. Champlin, a physician of Cleveland. They liked the community so well they decided to remain. Having had experience in handling her own family estate properties as well as others, Mrs. Douglass decided to enter the real estate business, first being associated with Henry Colquitt.

With Miss Ethyl H. Chambers, of Alabama, Mrs. Douglass in 1924 formed the partnership of Douglass-Champlin & Co. Since its inception the firm has specialized in estate management, rentals and



MRS. SARA COLE DOUGLASS

mortgage loans. It also has been engaged in such varied occupations as operation of a business college, a fire and life insurance business and an office equipment store.

Desiring to offer opportunity to loyal employes with years of service, the partners in 1945 incorporated to permit the employes to own a share in the business, the firm name being changed to Douglass-Champlin, Inc. Its members and stockholders now include besides Mrs. Douglass and Miss Chambers, Bettye M. Felton, with 19 years of service, Nancy E. Moseley, 16 years, Victoria B. Rutledge, 14 years, and Margaret D. Frye, 7 years.

In addition to their main office at 2211 Broadway, the firm has a branch office at Fort Myers Beach managed by Jewell Van Slyke.

Mrs. Douglass was a founder of the Fort Myers Little Theatre and has been its treasurer since organization. She is a director of the Lee County Welfare Association and chairman of the probation committee. She is a member and has served twice as president of the Fort Myers Board of Realtors. Since early girlhood she has been a member of the Presbyterian Church.

#### CLARENCE B. CHADWICK

Clarence Bennett Chadwick was born July 20, 1877, at Beatrice, Neb., the son of Edmund S. and Isadora (Bennett) Chadwick. His father was a lineal descendant of Sir Andrew Chadwick, of England, and his mother of Henri Francois Bennett who emigrated from England to America in 1630 and settled at Salem. She was a second cousin of Commodore Perry.

Mr. Chadwick was educated in the Green Bay, Wis., high school and at the University of Wisconsin where he was a member of Sigma Chi fraternity.

He began his business career as a confectionary salesman and later worked for a New York grocer's supply firm. In 1905 he purchased a half interest in a small lithography business in Denver for \$10,000. Two years later he bought out his partner and reorganized the business as the Bankers Supply Company.

At that time protective paper for checks was unknown and Mr. Chadwick conceived the idea of overprinting the paper with a pattern which would disclose attempts at altering the face of the check, providing protection against all but the most skillful forgers. In 1914 he opened an office in Chicago to make a nation-wide business of his concern. Within a year he was handling nearly half the bankers' supply business of

the city. To further protect his banker customers he later provided them with insurance of \$1,000 for each depositor using its checks. This feature, established in 1921, proved an important contribution to banking service.

In 1923 Mr. Chadwick came to Captiva Island on a winter vacation and was attracted by the fine fishing, mild temperature and excellent shell beaches. He purchased 400 acres on the island and retired there in 1925 after selling his business which by then had factories in four major cities and operated on a nation-wide basis.

In the beginning Mr. Chadwick planted all sorts of tropical fruits on his Captiva Island property but soon started specializing in limes. He learned that more than 80 per cent of the common limes grown in Florida died no matter how carefully they were grown. He then started growing his own stock and concentrated on a Dominican type which proved hardy.

Fruit from his groves, sold under the name Chad Limes, are sold by some of the largest chain stores and other groceries. The groves are now the world's largest and include 120 acres on Pine Island in addition to 400 on Sanibel and Captiva.

In addition to his grove interests Mr. Chadwick was active in real estate. In 1925 he organized the million-dollar Chadwick Company to deal in lands and securities and also organized the Federal Realty and Development Company with its principal office in Fort Myers.

Mr. Chadwick was a member of the Congressional Club, Washington, D. C., the Llossmoor Country Club, the Chicago Riding Club, and the Hamilton Club of Chicago. He was a 32nd degree Mason.

On February 25, 1913, Mr. Chadwick was married in San Francisco to Rosamond Lee Rouse, daughter of E. N. Rouse, horticulturist. Before her marriage Mrs. Chadwick was a nationally known concert singer. She continued with her career and during the season of 1919-20 sang leading roles with the Chicago Opera Company. After coming to Fort Myers she became one of the founders of the Woman's Community Club, was active in Garden Club and civic beautification work and was a close friend of the late Mrs. Thomas A. Edison.

Afflicted with arthritis, Mr. Chadwick suffered severely and was confined to a wheel chair for nearly a quarter century. However, he remained active in the direction of his extensive business affairs until a short time before his death on November 27, 1947, at his home on First Street.



CLARENCE BENNETT CHADWICK

#### FREDERICK HALL ALEXANDER

Frederick Hall Alexander was born May 30, 1875, in Gladsonberg Conn., the son of Louis Freeman and Louisa (Curtis) Alexander.

When fourteen years old he went to Colorado to live with his uncle but after a year, slipped away to seek his fortune. He ended up at a dairy farm where he made himself so useful that the owner finally put him into business with his son, Ira Robinson, forming the Alexander-Robinson Dairy.

Several years later the firm was dissolved after Alexander's partner went to New Mexico to get married. Young Alexander soon followed and took a job on a ranch near Clayton. This job ended abruptly when his horse stepped into a gopher hole. In the resulting crash, Alexander's leg was broken. Taken to Clayton for treatment, he met Katherine Jost and they were married on May 8, 1900.

In 1902 Mr. Alexander went to Scottsbluff, Neb., where he soon founded the Platt Valley Telephone Company. This company ultimately served twenty-three towns and became one of the most prosperous independents in the West. Mr. Alexander sold his controlling interest in the company in 1920 and retired.



FREDERICK HALL ALEXANDER

While in Scottsbluff, Mr. Alexander became the town's first mayor and served three terms.

After leaving Nebraska, he lived three years in Hawaii and in 1923 came to Fort Myers where he invested heavily in property. A strong good roads booster, he took a leading part in movements to develop Lee County's highway system. He was particularly active in the movement which resulted in the construction of the Cut-off Road between Tamiami Trail and Fort Myers Beach via McGregor Boulevard.

In 1926 Mr. Alexander purchased property on Hendry Creek and developed it into one of the most beautiful estates in the county, planting hundreds of tropical and semi-tropical shrubs, palms and trees. He was especially interested in fruit trees and had guavas from Java, Surinham cherries, sugar apples, peaches, apricots and every kind of tropical and semi-tropical fruit that will grow in Florida.

Mr. Alexander died April 21, 1943. He was survived by his widow and a daughter, Lois Roberta, the wife of James M. Congdon.

#### MILFORD M. TILLIS

Milford M. Tillis was born September 21, 1898, in Fort Meade, Fla., the son of William W. and Mattie (Crum) Tillis, both members of pioneer Florida families.

One of the last engagements of the long Seminole War was fought June 14, 1856, at the home of Mr. Tillis' grandfather, Wiloughby Tillis, about two miles south of Fort Meade. Five pioneers were killed in the battle at the Tillis place and in the pursuit of the Indians after they were driven off. Five other pioneers were seriously wounded. About the same number of Indians were killed or wounded.

Mr. Tillis was educated in Fort Meade schools and soon after he was graduated from Fort Meade High School he enlisted in the Navy. He served twenty-one months during World War I, most of the time on patrol duty along the Atlantic coast.

After being discharged from the Navy in January, 1919, Mr. Tillis went to Detroit where he worked three years in the Chrysler & Chalmers automobile factory. Returning to Florida in 1922 he went into business in Plant City with his brother-in-law, A. I. Mann. Two years later the two men came to Fort Myers and established the Lee County Furniture Company. In 1930, following the death of Mr. Mann, the name of the concern was changed to the Tillis Furniture Company. Since 1933 the company has been located at Main Street and Tonnelier Court.

Mr. Tillis is a member of Tropical Lodge No. 56, F.&A.M., Egypt Temple Shrine of Tampa, the Elks Lodge, American Legion, Chamber of Commerce and the First Methodist Church.

On December 27, 1936, he was married to Lois Crews, of La Belle.

#### JUDGE GEO. W. WHITEHURST

Judge George W. Whitehurst, Sr., was born May 18, 1891, in Wauchula, Fla., the son of L. W. and Molly Whitehurst, both natives of Florida. After being graduated from Wauchula High School he started working in the Bank of Wauchula, in which he later became cashier.

Leaving the bank he studied law at the University of Florida and passed the state bar examinations in 1915. A year later he was elected county judge of DeSoto County and served from January 1, 1917, to May 1919 when he was appointed judge of the 12th Judicial Circuit by Governor Sidney J. Catts. Then only twenty-eight years old, he was youngest circuit judge in Florida. He served continuously thereafter as circuit judge until he retired in August, 1947, being then the second oldest judge in point of service in the entire state.

Judge Whitehurst moved to Fort Myers in 1923 and has lived here continuously ever since. He is the owner of grove properties

at Wauchula and has cattle interests at Arcadia.

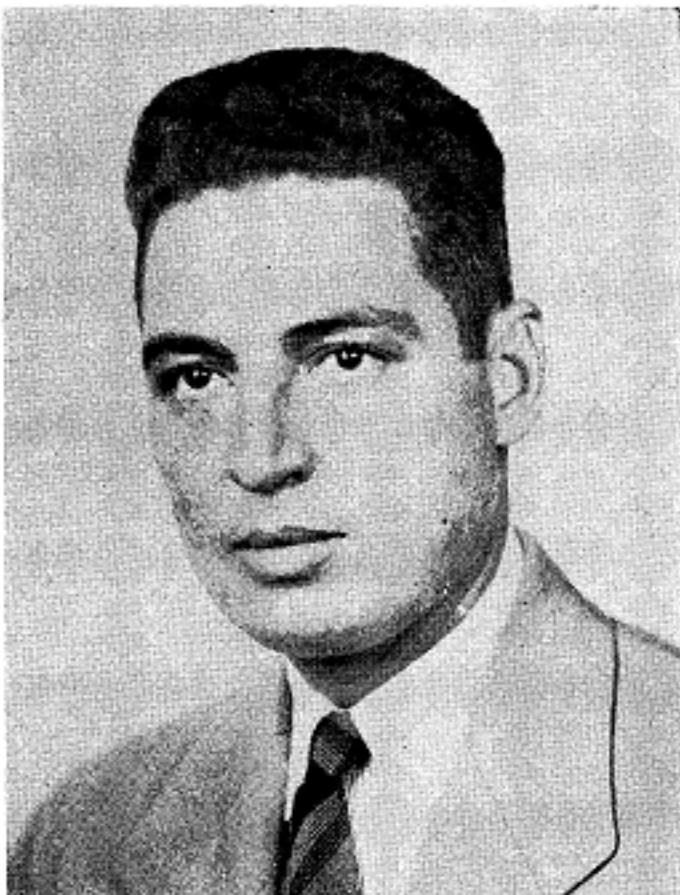
He is a Shriner, a member of the Masonic Lodge, the Knights of Pythias, the Elks lodge, and Phi Delta Phi fraternity.

Judge Whitehurst was married in December, 1912, to Myra F. Coker, of Arcadia. They have three children: George W. Whitehurst, Jr., Barbara, now Mrs. J. Danforth Browne, of Gainesville, and Margery Anne, who in 1948 was attending the University of North Carolina.

#### GEORGE W. WHITEHURST, JR.

George W. Whitehurst, Jr., was born March 20, 1916, in Wauchula, Fla., the son of Judge W. and Myra (Coker) Whitehurst. The family moved to Arcadia when he was six months old and he attended Arcadia public schools and later the schools of Fort Myers where he was graduated from high school in 1933. He was graduated from Stetson University with an A. B. degree in 1941.

On May 8, 1942, he was commissioned as an ensign in the U. S. Navy and served on mine sweepers in both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres until the war ended. He was placed on inactive status with the rank of lieutenant (s.g.) on January 24, 1946.



GEORGE W. WHITEHURST, JR.



FRANK A. PRATHER

Mr. Whitehurst then resumed his law studies at the University of Florida and was graduated with honors in 1947. He then started practicing law in Fort Myers.

He is president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, president of the Southwest Alumni Association of the University of Florida, commander of the Amvets, a director of the Chamber of Commerce and Edison Estate, and a member of the Moose Lodge, the American Legion, Sigma Nu social fraternity and Phi Alpha Delta legal fraternity.

On November 10, 1938, Mr. Whitehurst was married to Jean Harding, of Daytona Beach.

#### FRANK A. PRATHER

Frank A. Prather was born January 2, 1905, in Maryville, Tenn., the son of James Franklin and Zona (Huffstetler) Prather, the father a native of Kentucky and the mother of Tennessee. He was educated at Maryville College where he first took a preparatory course and later a regular college course.

Coming to Florida in January, 1924, Mr. Prather was made assistant manager of the J. G. McCrory Co., in St. Petersburg. Nine months later he was sent to Fort Myers to serve as manager of the local store of the

same company, becoming the youngest store manager in the chain.

Late in 1925 he resigned from McCrory's to enter the real estate business with Garrison & Shultz. Six months later he purchased a half interest in the Fort Myers Dry Cleaning Company, his partner being F. Ewing Starnes. In 1927 he purchased Mr. Starnes' interest and changed the concern's name to Prather's Dry Cleaning Company. In March, 1936, he bought the Fort Myers Quality Laundry, Inc., and changed the name to Prather's Laundry & Dry Cleaning Company. In July, 1946, he opened a plant in Lake Wales which he operates in conjunction with the Fort Myers plant. Construction of a new plant in Fort Myers was started in the summer of 1948.

To keep abreast of the latest methods of dry cleaning, Mr. Prather in 1929 attended the National Institute of Dry Cleaning, at Silver Springs, Md., graduating in the school's ninth class. C. B. Randall, who was an instructor at the school for fifteen years, is now sales manager of Mr. Prather's company. Mr. Prather also has attended special courses of the American Institute of Laundering at Joliet, Ill.

Mr. Prather is a director of the Kiwanis Club and of Fort Myers Golf and Country Club, is president of the Young Men's Bible Class of the First Methodist Church, and is a member of the Masonic and Elks lodges and Fort Myers Yacht Club.

On December 26, 1927, Mr. Prather was married to Sarah Goodman, of Fort Myers. They have two children: Frank Allen, Jr., born March 18, 1929, and Sarah Elizabeth, born June 16, 1936.

#### DR. BAKER WHISNANT

Dr. Baker Whisnant was born January 7, 1888, in Blacksburg, S. C., the son of James J. and Sally (Flemming) Whisnant. His father was a native of Charlotte, N. C., and his mother of Charleston, S. C. His grandfather, Philip Whisnant, won distinction during the War Between the States by being the first man in the United States to make cotton seed oil, supplying it to the Confederate Army.

Dr. Whisnant received his early education at Blacksburg and at Gordon, Ala., where the family moved in 1902. He then attended Baptist Junior College, at Newton, Ala. After being graduated in 1906 he studied medicine at Tulane University, in New Orleans, and received his M.D. degree in 1910.

From 1910 until 1917 Dr. Whisnant practiced at Brinson, Ga. He then went to Jackson County, Florida, where he practiced



DR. BAKER WHISNANT

seven years. In August, 1924, he came to Fort Myers and has practiced here ever since.

The county commissioners of Lee County appointed Dr. Whisnant county physician and health officer in 1931 and he has served in that capacity ever since, in addition to his regular practice.

Elected to the School Board in 1936, Dr. Whisnant served a two-year term. While on the board he helped handle arrangements for acquiring the tract of land in the Edison Park district intended for a civic center. Part of this land was used later as a site for the Lee Memorial Hospital and the football stadium and plans are now being completed for erecting a new high school there. In 1948 he was elected to serve again on the school board for a four-year term beginning January 1, 1949.

During the late 1930's Dr. Whisnant served as captain of Co. F, 106th Medical Regiment, Florida National Guard, finally becoming a major. While with the Guard he took a leading part in the movement to secure a \$125,000 armory for Fort Myers, to be constructed as a WPA project. Work on the armory was well advanced when WPA went out of existence, leaving the structure only partially completed.

Dr. Whisnant is a member of Tropical Lodge No. 56, F.&A.M., Egypt Temple Shrine, Tampa, and the Lee County and Florida Medical societies. He is a deacon in the First Baptist Church.

On March 12, 1913, Dr. Whisnant was married to Mae Fannie Gibson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Gibson, of Opelika, Ala. They have a daughter, Mary Frances, now the wife of George C. Elvey, of Fort Myers.

### JAMES ALFRED FRANKLIN

James Alfred Franklin was born February 11, 1895, in New Edinburg, Ark., the son of Charles L. and Margaret (McDaniel) Franklin. The family came to Florida in 1901 and Mr. Franklin attended public schools in Fort Pierce and Plant City, Columbia College, at Lake City, and was graduated from the University of Florida, at Gainesville, with an LL.B. degree in 1921.

After being admitted to the state bar, Mr. Franklin became associated with the law firm of Knight & Adair, in Jacksonville. In the fall of 1924 he came to Fort Myers to become a partner of Robert A. Henderson, Jr. under the firm name of Henderson & Franklin. He has been connected with the firm ever since. He also is engaged in the lumber business.

Mr. Franklin was in service during both world wars. During World War I he entered officers' training school and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Infantry and was assigned to the 152 Depot Brigade, Camp Sevier, S. C. In September, 1943, he was commissioned a major and was assigned to Military Government Section, U. S. Army; received training at the School of Military Government, Charlottesville, Va.; was sent overseas in January, 1944; saw service in Western Europe; was promoted to lieutenant colonel; was awarded a Bronze Star Medal and four campaign ribbons; helped establish military government in Frankfurt, Germany, and remained there until November, 1945.

In 1942 Mr. Franklin was elected state senator from the 24th Senatorial District and was re-elected in 1946.

Mr. Franklin is a past president of the Rotary Club of Fort Myers; district governor of Rotary International, 1930-40, in Florida; past commander, Fort Myers American Legion; past judge advocate, American Legion, Department of Florida; past member National Committee from Florida, American Legion; past president, Fort Myers Golf Club; past vice-president, Florida Bar Association, and a member of Alpha Tau Omega, college fraternity; Phi Delta Phi, legal fraternity, and Alpha Phi Epsilon, debating fraternity.

On October 11, 1921, Mr. Franklin was married to Eugene Waterbury, of Jacksonville. They have three children: Margery, born September 24, 1922; James A., Jr., born June 4, 1924, and Nancy, born November 12, 1932.



JAMES A. FRANKLIN

### EDWARD C. ALLEN

Edward C. Allen was born on a farm near Greenfield, Ind. February 1, 1882, the eldest son of George W. and Martha (Lowe) Allen. His father descended from the Allen family of North Carolina, and his mother from the Lowe family of New York.

Mr. Allen was educated in the public schools of Greenfield and in 1900 was graduated from Vories' Business College in Indianapolis, also International Accountants Society of Chicago. During the next four years he held bookkeeping positions in Indianapolis and then went to St. Louis. He remained in St. Louis 20 years doing accounting work and holding executive positions with a number of concerns. In 1921 he engaged in the practice of public accounting.

In 1925, Mr. Allen came to Fort Myers and has continued the practice of public accounting and income tax work. He is now associated with Rexford W. Gilliam in the firm of Allen & Gilliam, Certified Public Accountants. In 1929, he was appointed as receiver for Iona Drainage District of Lee County and successfully handled the refinancing of the district through the R.F.C. serving until 1938. (See Index: Iona Drainage District.)

On October 8, 1908, Mr. Allen was married to Mary E. Sutton, of St. Louis,

Mo. They have three children: Dorothy, now Mrs. Ralph Greene, of Boulder, Colo.; Martha, now Mrs. Louis M. Harvey, Pensacola, Fla.; and George E., practicing attorney at law and certified public accountant, of Fort Myers. They have seven grandchildren: Ralph Greene, Jr., David Lee Greene, Daniel Michael Greene, William E. Harvey, Katherine Allen, Jacqueline Allen, and Geraldine Allen.

Mr. Allen and his family are members of the Congregational Church.

#### F. IRVING HOLMES

F. Irving Holmes was born in Alpena, Mich., August 6, 1882, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Holmes. He attended the Alpena public schools and was graduated from the law school of University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor.

After leaving the university, Mr. Holmes became associated with his father in a wholesale grocery firm the latter had established and later became president of the company. He also was named president of the Alpena County Savings Bank.

In 1924 Mr. Holmes came to Florida to manage the Barron G. Collier interests at Everglades and a year later came to Fort Myers to operate the Collier steamship and



F. IRVING HOLMES



EDWARD C. ALLEN

bus lines. Later he became president of the Lee County Bank, Title & Trust Company, in which Mr. Collier had become the principal stockholder. After the death of Mr. Collier in 1937, Mr. Holmes and his associates bought control of the bank and he continued as president.

Mr. Holmes was a leader in many civic enterprises and served one term in the state legislature as representative from Lee County. He was a past president of the Rotary Club and also served as state governor of the organization. He was active in the Little Theatre both in executive capacities and in some of the plays. He was a member of the Episcopal Church.

On October 30, 1906, Mr. Holmes was married to Edna Dunlop, of Alpena, Mich. They had three children: Barbara, now Mrs. Joseph A. Ansley; Kathleen, now Mrs. Thomas C. Vickory, of Tampa; and Paul, who died at the age of 24. Mrs. Holmes died December 28, 1943. Three years later, Mr. Holmes married a second time, to Mrs. Marie Gaudy, of Chicago.

Mr. Holmes died July 9, 1947. He was survived by his widow, his two daughters, a brother, Wendell of Detroit, and two sisters, Mrs. George Harris of Detroit, and Mrs. M. A. Willington, of Richmond.

## DAVID GREEN SHAPARD

David Green Shapard was born July 21, 1896, in Shelbyville, Tenn., the son of David G. and Martha Jane (Allen) Shapard, both natives of Tennessee. He was educated at Webb School, Bellbuckle, Tenn., Fitzgerald & Clark Preparatory School, Tullahoma, Tenn., and Vanderbilt University, at Nashville, Tenn.

Mr. Shapard enlisted in the First Missouri Field Artillery in St. Louis, in July, 1917. Soon afterward his corps was absorbed by the 35th Division and sent overseas. He was discharged in April, 1919.

After leaving the army Mr. Shapard went into the brokerage and insurance business in Shelbyville, Tenn., he remained until June, 1925, when he came to Fort Myers to work for W. P. Franklin at the Franklin Arms Hotel. In November, 1929, he leased the St. Charles Hotel and operated it until November, 1933, when he leased the Bradford Hotel which he has operated ever since.

Mr. Shapard was elected city councilman in April, 1933. Two years later he ran against Mayor Frank A. Whitney, who was seeking re-election, and was elected. He was re-elected in 1937 and 1939 and resigned February 1, 1940, to devote more time to his business. He was re-elected again in 1945 but refused to run in 1947. After he first took office, Mr. Shapard never had opposition at any election. (See Index: Depression Period.)



DAVID GREEN SHAPARD



SIDNEY R. DAVIS

Mr. Shapard is a member and was twice president of the Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the Rotary Club, First Methodist Church, the Lewisburg (Tenn.) Lodge of F.&A.M., the American Legion and Fort Myers Golf and Country Club.

On November 10, 1939, Mr. Shapard was married to Mrs. Jean (Grubb) Brown. They have three children: Hunter Brown, Jr., Leighton Brown and Louise Brown.

## SIDNEY R. DAVIS

Sidney R. Davis, Jr., was born October 23, 1901, in Chincoteague, Va., the son of Sidney R. and Mary (Stubbs) Davis. His father was a native of Maryland and his mother of Virginia.

After being graduated from high school in Chincoteague, Mr. Davis started working as a teller for the Bank of Chincoteague and later was made assistant cashier.

In 1925, Mr. Davis came to Fort Myers on a vacation and while here became acquainted with Col. J. W. Blanding, then president of the Lee County Bank, Title and Trust Co. Colonel Blanding offered him a position in the bank and he accepted. He remained with the bank as assistant cashier through its closing in 1933 and its reorganization.

In November, 1934, Mr. Davis left the bank and started a men's clothing store in

the Bradford Hotel Building, at 1024 First Street. Since then his concern has become one of the leading men's clothing stores in southwest Florida.

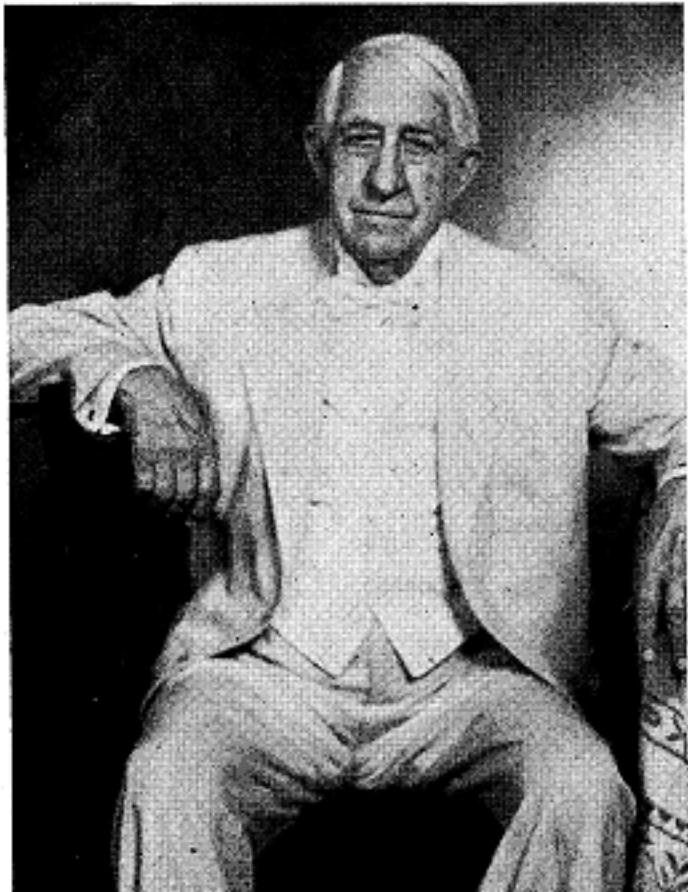
Mr. Davis is a director of the Lee County Bank. He is a past president and director of the Chamber of Commerce, past president of the Kiwanis Club and Merchants Association, a director of the Lee Memorial Hospital, a member of the Masonic Lodge, Shrine, Fort Myers Country Club, Executive Club, and Junior Chamber of Commerce. He is also a steward in the First Methodist Church.

On July 26, 1939, Mr. Davis was married to Bernese Barfield, of Slater, Florida.

### J. HENRY RAGSDALE

J. Henry Ragsdale was born February 16, 1870, at Aspen Hill, near Pulaski, Tenn., the son of Richard H. and Anna (Howard) Ragsdale. His father was a native of Kentucky and his mother of Tennessee.

After attending public schools in Giles County, Tenn., Mr. Ragsdale took a commercial course at Goodman's Business College, in Nashville. He then started working as a bookkeeper in the Peoples Bank at Pulaski. Leaving the bank in 1896, he went into the funeral and furniture business in which he remained six years. During this period he owned a monument



**J. HENRY RAGSDALE**  
*(As he looked impersonating Edison in Pageant of Light)*

plant which built the 20-foot monument of Sam Davis for the Daughters of the Confederacy which is still standing in the Pulaski public square.

In 1904 Mr. Ragsdale became engaged in the real estate business. He had his headquarters in Pulaski but developed subdivisions and handled auctions throughout middle Tennessee, northern Alabama and Mississippi, Georgia and Florida.

Coming to Lee County in 1912, Mr. Ragsdale represented a syndicate which bought 5,000 acres in the vicinity of Surveyors Creek, which they named Imperial River. They platted and named the town of Bonita Springs, formerly called Survey Post Office. Harvie E. Heitman and John M. Dean had half interest in the property and Mr. Ragsdale and his associates the other half.

Mr. Ragsdale came to Fort Myers to live in December, 1924, and in February, 1925, placed on the market the section of Bonita Springs located west of the Tamiami Trail. Before the boom ended he sold every lot and also sold a 3,800-acre tract north of Bonita Springs to the DuPont interests for \$240,000. Since 1925 Mr. Ragsdale has been engaged in general real estate and insurance business.

While living in Pulaski, Mr. Ragsdale was elected and served as mayor and was a member of the Methodist Episcopal board of stewards for several years. He was elected treasurer of Martin College by the Middle Town M. E. Conference and served until he came to Florida.

Since coming to Fort Myers, he has served as chairman of the board of stewards of the First Methodist Church. He is a member of the Knights of Pythias, Woodmen of the World and the Chamber of Commerce.

During the past two Pageant of Light celebrations, Mr. Ragsdale has portrayed Thomas E. Edison, whom he resembles.

On July 3, 1894, Mr. Ragsdale was married to Miss Elizabeth Bull, of Elkton, Tenn. They have two daughters: Clarissa, now the wife of Thomas Q. Harrison, teacher and lecturer of Chicago, and Mary Lambeth, now the wife of David R. Wade II, an attorney in Pulaski.

Mr. and Mrs. Ragsdale live ten months of the year in Fort Myers and two months each summer at Mt. Eagle, Tenn.

### CARL HANTON

Carl Hanton was born October 19, 1888, in Superior, Wis., the son of Edward L. and Belle (Shoemaker) Hanton. He was educated in the Superior public schools and the University of Wisconsin which he left to become a cub reporter on the Superior Telegram. He advanced to managing editor of the newspaper.

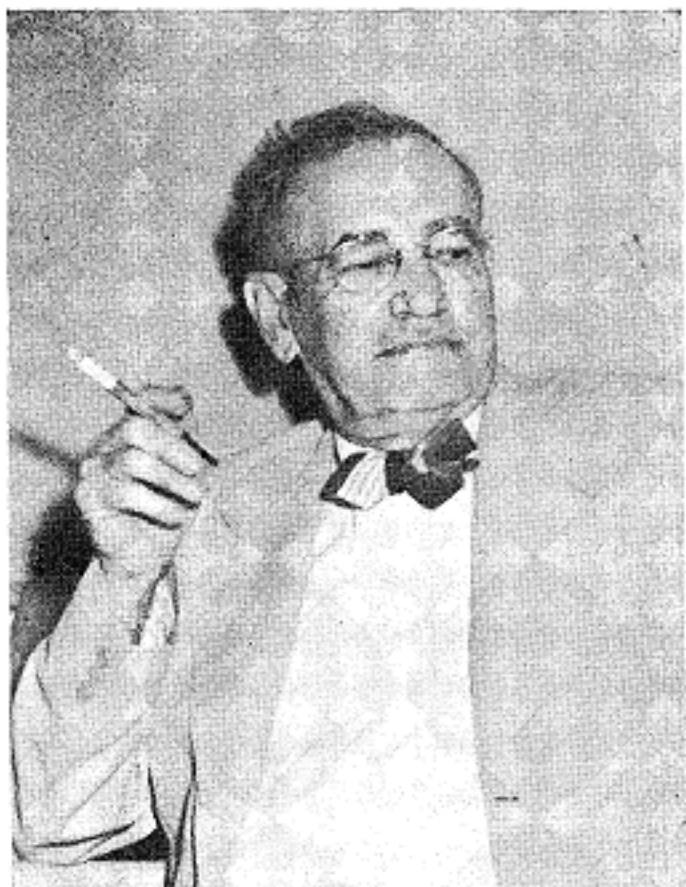
Mr. Hanton joined the Army before the United States entered World War I and during the Mexican trouble was stationed at San Antonio. During the war he served as captain of infantry with the famous Red Arrow 32nd Division in France. At the end of the war he wrote the history of the division.

Returning to civilian life, Mr. Hanton became a correspondent for the Associated Press covering the Minnesota legislature. Later he was public relations counsel for the wheat rust campaign in thirteen states.

Wanting a newspaper of his own, Mr. Hanton in 1926 purchased the Fort Myers Tropical News with Harrison Fuller as a partner. The News-Press was merged with the Fort Myers Press in 1931 to form the News-Press, of which Mr. Hanton is president.

Under Mr. Hanton's editorship the News-Press acquired influence throughout the state, his editorials being quoted extensively by other Florida newspapers and read respectfully by officials in Tallahassee. At home and in other cities, readers recognized the sagacity and disinterestedness of his counsel. Due to the fact that Mr. Hanton is a perfectionist, the News-Press attained a high standard seldom seen outside large cities.

Mr. Hanton's active interest in politics has included personal friendships with



CARL HANTON



SAM W. JOHNSTON

governors from Dave Sholtz, whom he helped elect, to present Governor-elect Fuller Warren.

Mr. Hanton is a former president of the Chamber of Commerce, Associated Dailies of Florida, Florida Press Association and the Associated Press Association of Florida, a colonel on Fuller Warren's staff, and a member of the Fort Myers Golf Club and the American Legion.

On July 3, 1922, Mr. Hanton was married to Gladys Anderson, of Duluth, Minn.

#### SAM W. JOHNSTON

Sam W. Johnston was born January 2, 1902, in Yazoo City, Miss., the son of Sam W. and Mary (Pierce) Johnston. He attended the Yazoo City schools and was graduated from high school in 1919.

After leaving school Mr. Johnston worked for two years for the Staple Cotton Cooperative Growers Association in Greenwood, Miss., and then was engaged for three years in the automobile business in Yazoo City.

Coming to Fort Myers in February, 1925, at the height of the boom, Mr. Johnston went into the real estate business. After the crash he worked a short time at the Franklin Arms Hotel and then went into the insurance business, first for the Mutual

Life Insurance Company and soon afterward establishing an agency of his own. In 1928 he formed the Fort Myers Insurance Agency, Inc., of which he became president. He has headed the company ever since.

Mr. Johnston is a stockholder in the Fort Myers Realty Company, a director of the First National Bank, vice-president of the Lee County Packing Company, vice-president of the Florida Association of Insurance Agents, a past president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club, and a member of the Masonic Lodge, Egypt Temple, of Tampa, the Elks, and the Fort Myers Country Club.

In 1930 Mr. Johnston was married to Jessie Bonner, of Birmingham, Ala. They had two children: Mary Weldon, born March 2, 1932, and Sam W. Johnston, Jr., born April 30, 1933. Following his wife's death Mr. Johnston married again, on August 14, 1940, to Tommie Covington, of Rockingham, N. C. They have two children: James C., born May 10, 1943, and Ann Forest, born February 20, 1947.

### WILLIAM R. SPEAR

William R. Spear was born November 12, 1908, in Orange, N. J., the son of Robert and Ethel Spear. He was educated in New York City public schools and when seventeen years old came to Fort Myers and got



WILLIAM R. SPEAR

a job as a reporter on the Tropical News. He later became news editor of the paper.

Early in 1931 Mr. Spear went back North and after working a half year on the copy desk of the Boston Herald joined the staff of the Associated Press, first in Philadelphia and then in New York. While in New York, from 1932 through 1935, he covered various trans-Atlantic flights, gang slayings, the Lindbergh kidnaping and other big stories.

In 1936 Mr. Spear was assigned to Miami to head the AP bureau. Three years later he was transferred to the Washington bureau where he served until 1943. On military leave from the AP he then served in the army overseas, as a sergeant, on the staff of the Stars and Stripes in London, Paris and Liege. He was managing editor of the London and Liege editions. For meritorious service in Belgium he was awarded the Bronze Star medal.

Returning to the AP after the war, Mr. Spear rejoined the Washington staff. During his eight years with the press association, before and after the war, he covered Congress and the White House and knew Presidents Roosevelt and Truman personally. He became a member of the White House Correspondents Association, National Press Club and Congressional Press Galleries.

On September 1, 1947, Mr. Spear resigned from the Associated Press and returned to Fort Myers to become editor of the News-Press, which position he still holds.

On September 9, 1934, Mr. Spear was married to Eleanor Bordeaux, of Fort Myers.

### RALPH E. KURTZ

Ralph E. Kurtz was born September 4, 1893, in North Salem, Ind., the son of Charles E. and Alice (Henry) Kurtz, both natives of Indiana. Graduated from the North Salem high school in 1912. Mr. Kurtz then attended De Pauw University, at Greencastle, Ind., where he studied law. He was admitted to the Indiana state bar in 1913.

Continuing his study at law, Mr. Kurtz went to Central Normal College at Danville, Ind., and was graduated with LL. B. and B. S. degrees in 1915. He then went to Indiana University, in Bloomington, Ind., for a post-graduate course and in 1917 received a second LL. B. degree.

Immediately after war was declared in 1917 Mr. Kurtz was commissioned as a first lieutenant in the infantry. He served overseas eleven months, commanding Co. L, 116th Infantry, a National Guard unit of Lynchburg, Va. He was released from service in July, 1919.

From August, 1919, to June, 1920, Mr. Kurtz practiced law in Indianapolis in the office of J. W. Noel. He then came to Florida and located at Moore Haven. He was admitted to the Florida state bar in October, 1920, and practiced law in Moore Haven until September 18, 1926, when he came to Fort Myers where he has practiced ever since.

Although living in Fort Myers, Mr. Kurtz has extensive real estate holdings in the Lake Okeechobee region and has been a director of the Bank of Clewiston since 1924.

Mr. Kurtz has taken an active interest in politics for many years. He served as prosecuting attorney for Glades County from 1921 until January 1, 1925, and represented Glades County in the 1925 session of the state legislature and at two special sessions. He was city attorney of Fort Myers in 1941 and 1942 and again in 1945 and 1946. He was elected mayor of Fort Myers in February, 1947, but was not a candidate for re-election in October, 1948.

Mr. Kurtz is a past master of the Masonic Lodge, a director of the Chamber of Commerce, a steward in the First Methodist Church, and a member of the Rotary Club and the Florida State Bar Association.

On August 20, 1917, Mr. Kurtz was married to Daisy Smith, of Columbia City,



RALPH E. KURTZ



JOHN HENRY FEARS

Ind. They have three children: Thomas Allan, born July 15, 1918; Howard Edward, born December 7, 1924 and Martha Elizabeth, born June 22, 1928. A third son, Lieut. John Henry Kurtz, a heavy bombardment pilot, was killed March 2, 1944, while returning to England from a flight.

#### JOHN HENRY FEARS

John Henry Fears was born November 11, 1888, in Cottonwood, Ala., the son of Thomas P. and Emma (Davis) Fears. He attended public schools in Cottonwood, receiving a high school certificate, and then took a commercial course in the Georgia-Alabama Business College, at Macon, Ga.

After working a short time in Cottonwood, Mr. Fears moved in 1910 to Campbellton, Fla., where he became manager of a general merchandise store. In 1914 he was named cashier of the Central State Bank at Campbellton. During the next ten years, while holding the bank position, Mr. Fears also dealt extensively in farm produce and cattle, buying from farmers and cattlemen in the Jackson County district. He also built and operated a potato dehydrating plant with a capacity of thirty carloads of potatoes a year.

In 1924, Mr. Fears closed the bank, paid off the depositors in full, and moved to Everglades to join the Barron G. Collier

organization serving as manager of the Bank of Everglades. He later was appointed tax collector of Collier County and served until January, 1927, when he moved to LaBelle to take charge of the Bank of LaBelle.

On July 15, 1927, Mr. Fears came to Fort Myers to become vice-president and cashier of the Lee County Bank, Title & Trust Company. When the bank was reorganized in 1933 and the name changed to the Lee County Bank, he continued in the same position. In September, 1947, he was elected president of the institution.

Mr. Fears is a director of the Inter-County Telephone & Telegraph Company, a director in the Lee County Memorial Hospital, a Shriner, and a member of the Rotary Club, Elks Lodge, Chamber of Commerce, and Fort Myers Country Club. He has been active in Boy Scout work for a number of years and has served as vice-president of Sunny Land Council and chairman of Royal Palm District.

On December 31, 1937, Mr. Fears was married to Scottsy Stapleton, daughter of John and Sarah (Scott) Stapleton, of Greenwood, Fla.

#### GEORGE ELEMENT JUDD

George Element Judd was born January 4, 1906, in Washington, D. C., the son of George Herbert and Marian (Briggs) Judd.



RUSSELL E. RICH

He was graduated from Sidwell's Friends School in 1924 and from Yale University with a Ph.B. degree in 1928.

Mr. Judd came to Lee County in 1929 and started operating a small citrus grove inherited from his father. He added to his citrus holdings from time to time, making a total of 250 acres. In 1936 he built and operated the Mariana Grove Light & Power Co. plant which he sold to the Lee County Electric Cooperative in 1940.

In 1936 Mr. Judd also built and operated the packing house of Mariana Grove Packers which he sold to Mariana Growers, Inc., in 1945 together with his entire citrus holdings.

Mr. Judd in 1937 bought the canning plant of the Fort Myers Canning Co. and operated it as the Southwest Florida Canning Corporation until sold to Russell & Decker Co. in 1943.

Mr. Judd is president of Judd & Detweiler, Inc., Washington, D. C., printers; president, the Mariana Grove, Inc., Fort Myers, mail order citrus products; director, Lee County Bank; director, Security Savings and Commercial Bank, Washington, D. C., and director, Tampa Armature Works, Inc., Tampa.

He is a member of the Fort Myers Rotary Club, former president of the Lee County Chamber of Commerce, and former chairman of Fort Myers District, Sunny Land Council, Boy Scouts.

In 1932 Mr. Judd was married to Kimi Tsunoda.

#### RUSSELL E. RICH

Russell E. Rich was born January 12, 1898, on a farm near Fayetteville, Washington County, Ark., the son of Marcus B. and May (Garner) Rich. He was graduated from high school in Siloam Springs, Ark., and then enrolled at Hendrix College, Conway, Ark.

Leaving college to enlist in the Arkansas National Guard, he served throughout World War I, his unit becoming a part of the 39th Division Field Artillery. He served almost a year overseas and was discharged on August, 1919. He then went to Colorado Springs, Col., where he became engaged in the drug business.

In October, 1925, Mr. Rich came to Florida, locating at Arcadia. After a brief venture in real estate, he started working for an Arcadia drug store where he remained until 1927 when he went on the road as a salesman for Joseph H. Walsh, distributor in Florida for Hood tires. In 1928 he was assigned to Tampa as branch manager.

Joining the Standard Oil Company in 1931 as a salesman, Mr. Rich made his headquarters in Fort Myers. Two years later he bought the Fort Myers agency of Standard Oil and has owned it ever since.

Mr. Rich is a past post commander and past district commander of the American Legion, a past director of the Chamber of Commerce, a director of the Kiwanis Club, and a member of the Masonic and Elks lodges and the First Christian Church.

On June 24, 1918, Mr. Rich was married to Kathleen Williams, of Siloam Springs, Ark. They have two children: Russell E., Jr., born March 31, 1920, and Mary Lee, born August 25, 1928, now Mrs. James R. Branch, IV.

### ARTHUR W. D. HARRIS

Arthur W. D. Harris was born April 19, 1905, in Bentonia, Yazoo County, Mississippi, the son of Arthur and Willie (Devlin) Harris, both natives of Mississippi. He attended public schools in Yazoo City, was graduated from high school in Columbia, Miss., and then attended Mississippi A. & M., at Starkville.

In 1925 Mr. Harris came to Florida and started working as a clerk for United Markets in Tampa. Within a year he was made a store manager. In 1927 United Markets sent him to Winter Haven where he managed one of their stores for five years. On September 27, 1932, he was transferred to Fort Myers to manage the United Markets store at First and Jackson.

In 1933 the United Markets Company was taken over by Home Supply Stores, Inc. Mr. Harris was retained by Home Supply as manager of the Fort Myers store. In June, 1935, he bought the store from the parent concern and incorporated it under the name of Home Supply Store of Fort Myers, Inc. The store was then located in the Collier Arcade Building. In 1944 the Harris Arcade Corporation, of which Mr. Harris is president, purchased the First Street portion of the arcade with a frontage on First of 117 feet west of the Darling Building.

Mr. Harris is a director in Frog (Florida Retail Owned Groceries) and is secretary-treasurer of the Ostego Bay Corporation. During 1947-48 he served as president of the Chamber of Commerce and is now vice-president of the organization. He served twice as president of the Fort Myers Merchants Association and four years as vice-president of the Florida Retail Grocers Association. He is a past president of the Rotary Club, an Elk, a steward of the First Methodist Church, and a member of the Jaycees. During World War II he served a year as a member of the OPA war price and



ARTHUR W. D. HARRIS

rationing board and also was chairman for three years of the food committee of the Red Cross.

On April 15, 1926, Mr. Harris was married in Tampa to Frances Andrews, of Nashville, Tenn. They have two daughters, Frances Willie, who in 1948 was a senior at the University of Florida, at Tallahassee, and Barbara Louise a sophomore at the same university. Frances was chosen queen of the Pageant of Light during Edison Centennial Year and Barbara was maid to the queen in the 1948 pageant.

### WILLIAM R. NEWTON

William R. (Bill) Newton was born February 5, 1910, in Marion, S. C., the son of William H. and Bertha (Saltsman) Newton. His father was a native of New York and his mother of Pennsylvania. In 1923 the family moved to Bradenton, Fla., where William was graduated from the Manatee High School in 1928.

After leaving high school, Mr. Newton went on the road as a salesman, opening nine counties in South Florida for Tom's Peanuts. Leaving this concern in 1931, he became a salesman for the Eli Witt Cigar Company, covering a large territory in the southern part of the state. In 1933 he moved to Fort Myers.

Desiring to go into business for himself, Mr. Newton left the Tampa cigar firm in 1939 and opened a phonograph store in Fort Myers which he operated for five years. In 1944 he branched into the electric appliance business, opening a store at 1144 First Street. In December, 1947, he moved to his present location on Cleveland Avenue.

Mr. Newton has the Fort Myers agency for Hotpoint Household Appliances and also for Carrier Air Conditioning and Commercial Refrigeration equipment. During the past year he installed more than forty air conditioning systems in Fort Myers business establishments and homes.

Mr. Newton is a member of the Elks Lodge, the Chamber of Commerce and the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

On April 25, 1934, he was married to Mabel Patricia Trollinger, of Atlanta, Ga. They have three children: William R., Jr., Patricia Ray, and James.

### THE BAIL BROTHERS

Frank W. Bail and his brother, Ralph E. Bail, were born in Wellsville, Ohio, sons of George W. and Margaret (Wooster) Bail. Frank was born July 3, 1891 and Ralph, June 18, 1894. Both were graduated

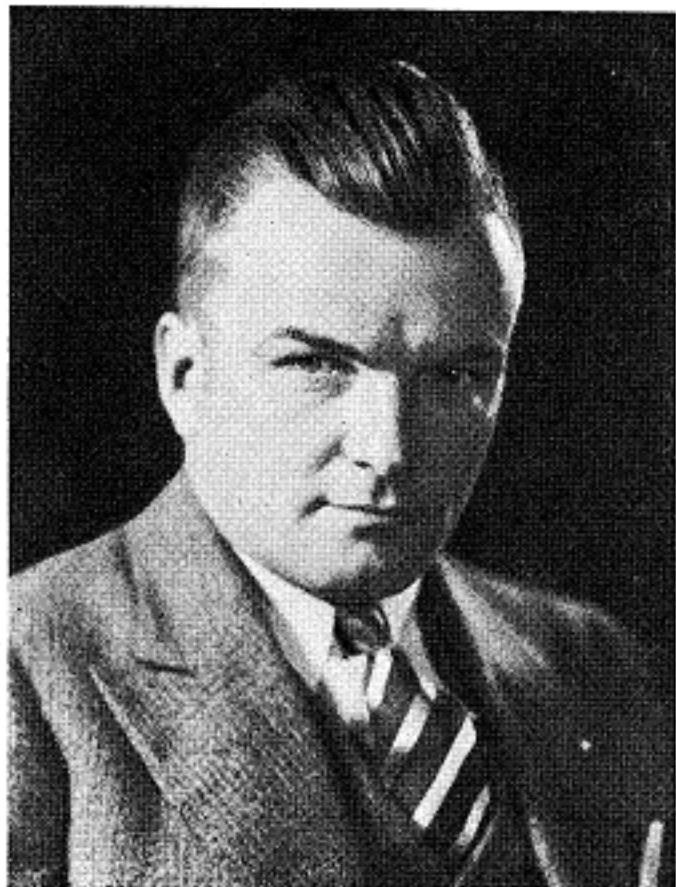
from East Technical High School in Cleveland, where Frank taught Machine Design for a period of three years after graduation. Frank was graduated from the School of Architecture, Columbia University, in the Class of '17, and Ralph was in the Class of '18 at Ohio State University.

In August, 1917, Frank was commissioned a first lieutenant of Infantry in the U. S. Army. Seriously injured on Monta Grappa, Italy, Friday, September 13, 1918, he was a patient in fourteen Italian, French and American Army Hospitals until April 1920, when he was discharged. He then organized the Frank W. Bail Co., Inc., Architects and Engineers, with home office in Cleveland and branch office in Pittsburgh. Ralph came with the firm shortly after its organization and served consecutively as field inspector, specifications writer, structural engineer and chief draftsman. In 1926 he became vice-president and general manager.

During the 20's and early 30's the firm won national recognition in the design of commercial buildings, public buildings and institutions. Numbered among them were the Lake Shore Hotel, the Juvenile Courts Group, the Fifth Church of Christ Scientist, seven Loews Ohio Theaters, five office buildings in Cleveland, the Lorain County Tuberculosis Hospital in Amherst, O., the Dormont Theater in Pittsburgh, the State Prison Farm at London, O., the Apple Creek Institution for Feeble Minded and, in association with another firm, the State Office Building at Columbus, O. The firm also served for seven years as consulting architects to the State of Ohio on all state-owned buildings and institutions. The construction cost of the projects which the firm designed and supervised, not including those on which it served as consultants, totalled \$84,000,000 during a thirteen-year period.

In 1933 the Bail brothers decided to retire from active practice and toured the southeastern States on search of pleasant home sites. They selected Fort Myers because of its tropical climate and famous fishing waters. In 1934 Frank Bail, at the suggestion of John Erskine and with assurance of his assistance, wrote "A Man in Arms," a story based on his experiences in World War I. It became a best seller in 1935.

After four years of "taking it easy," a group of Lee County officials and bankers persuaded the Bail brothers to re-establish a small architectural and engineering organization to design such projects as the Lee County Airport, the Lee Memorial Hospital and, in association with Freeman Horton, Bradenton engineer, the Fort Myers Yacht Basin.



FRANK W. BAIL

In January, 1941, they were summoned to Washington by the Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army, and virtually ordered to set up another large organization such as they had operated in Cleveland with a complete complement of engineering departments. This necessitated the opening of branch offices in Bradenton and Jacksonville, and shortly after "Pearl Harbor" the technical personnel in their Florida offices reached a peak of 184 men and 14 women, with more than 70 engineers and inspectors in field offices supervising construction.

Contracts from the Bureau of Yards and Docks, U. S. Navy, followed in 1942. At this time, Freeman H. Horton, who had been serving as chief engineer, became a partner in the firm, the name being changed to Bail, Horton & Associates. Included among Army and Navy contracts were such projects as the Basic Flying School (Hendricks Field), Sebring; Ferrying Command Airport, Homestead; Avon Park Bombing and Gunnery Range; Vero Beach Naval Air Station; St. Simons Island Naval Air Station, Georgia; Motor Repair and Supply Depot—36th Street Airport, Miami; Albert Whitted Air Field, St. Petersburg; O. T. Dive Bombardment Station, Cross City; Jacksonville No. 2 Naval Airport; MacDill Field Extensions, Tampa; auxiliary airports, air stations, extensions, buildings and utilities at Banana River, Pensacola, Richmond, Melbourne, Daytona Beach, Lake City, Ft. Lauderdale, DeLand and Sanford. During the war years the firm designed and supervised Army and Navy projects aggregating \$204,000,000 in construction cost.

Shortly after termination of the war, the firm returned most of its personnel to its executive offices in Fort Myers and to its utilities office in Bradenton, retaining Jacksonville as its mechanical engineering office. Recently it opened a Cleveland branch in the Engineers Building. Its current personnel includes 72 in the Fort Myers office, 44 in Bradenton, 11 in Jacksonville and 9 in Cleveland.

Since termination of the war the firm has designed Park Tower, Cleveland, a 20-story office building for medical clinics, costing \$4,200,000; Tampa Bay Bridge, \$15,000,000, now in process of financing; the Female Correctional Institution at Ocala for the State of Florida, \$6,000,000, construction of the first quarter of which was recently started, and is now completing design of a Neuropsychiatric Hospital for the Veterans Administration to be located at Gainesville and estimated to cost \$21,600,000.



RALPH E. BAIL

Bail, Horton & Associates are now recognized as the largest firm of architects and engineers in the southeastern United States. During the past eight years they have transplanted to Florida from other states at least threescore of technical men with their families. Though they operate by remote control throughout the eastern half of the United States, few, if any, of their employees could now be persuaded to leave Florida and particularly the small city of Fort Myers, where without need for commuters' trains and subways, they have added two hours a day for devotion to fishing and other recreation.

In August, 1912, Frank Bail was married to Florence Barnes of Cleveland. They have two children, Florence Jane, now Mrs. Robert W. Falk, and George H. Bail; also a grandchild, Barbara Falk. George, after serving overseas as a captain of artillery and earning his masters degree at Princeton, is gradually taking over his father's duties with the firm. Jane, after graduating from Duke and a secretarial course at Katherine Gibbs, New York City, served the firm as a travelling secretary while her husband was overseas.

Ralph Bail was married in 1931 to Fanny Porter of Cleveland and resides in a beautiful riverfront home.

### HARRY FAGAN

Harry Fagan was born April 26, 1896, in Plymouth, N. C., the son of M. S. and Ina B. (Smith) Fagan. He attended public schools in Plymouth and the Massey Business College in Richmond, Va.

After leaving business college Mr. Fagan worked for a number of banks in eastern North Carolina and then was named cashier of the Raleigh Banking & Trust Company, in Raleigh, N. C., where he also became president of the North Carolina Agricultural Credit Corporation. While holding these positions he read law for two years in Judge George Pell's Law School.

In 1931 he was appointed by the Treasury Department as a receiver of insolvent national banks and liquidated several banks in South Carolina and six in Florida. In 1934 he came to Fort Myers to serve as cashier of the newly organized First National Bank in Fort Myers. Two years later he was elected to serve as vice-president, as well as cashier. He has been the active senior executive officer of the bank since it was opened.

Mr. Fagan is a past president of the Kiwanis Club, served for two years during World War II as chairman of the Lee County Chapter of the Red Cross, and is a past president of the Lee County Chamber of Commerce. He is now chairman of the board of deacons, chairman of the finance committee and teacher in the Sunday School of the First Baptist Church.



JAMES THOMAS SMOOT

On May 15, 1920, Mr. Fagan was married to Viola Kilpatrick, of Ayden, N. C., Mr. and Mrs. Fagan have a son, Dr. Harry Fagan, Jr., who was graduated in June, 1948, from the Bowman Gray School of Medicine of Wake Forest College, Wake Forest, N. C., and in the winter of 1948-49 was serving his internship at the Atlantic City Hospital.

### JAMES THOMAS SMOOT

James Thomas Smoot was born February 9, 1906, in McColl, S. C., the son of Benjamin Franklin and Roberta (Everett) Smoot. His father was a native of South Carolina and his mother of North Carolina.

Mr. Smoot attended public schools in McColl and after being graduated from McColl High School in 1923 took a two-year textile course at Clemson College, in Clemson, S. C. But instead of entering the textile industry he started working in his father's electrical store in Laurinburg, N. C.

In 1929 Mr. Smoot came to Florida to work for the Collier interests, becoming manager of the Manhattan Mercantile Hardware Store in Everglades City. He remained there five years. Early in 1934 he came to Fort Myers and became associated with I. W. Riggs in the South Fish Company. Upon Mr. Riggs' retirement from business in 1944, Mr. Smoot acquired ownership of the concern. In July, 1945, he sold a part interest to C. E. Willis and the business has been operated since then on a partnership basis.

The South Fish Company, organized in 1916, is the only concern in Fort Myers which is classified as a producing dealer, buying from fishermen from Naples on the south to Bokeelia on the north and shipping by rail and truck to markets as far away as New York. The firm also handles a complete line of marine hardware.

In 1945 Mr. Smoot was elected as a trustee of the Lee County schools and is now chairman of the board, having been re-elected in 1947. He is now serving his third year.

He is a member of Tamiami Trail Lodge No. 262, F.&A.M., the Egypt Temple Shrine of Tampa, the Elks lodge and the Rotary Club. He is a member of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries under Governor Millard Caldwell and is the Florida director of the National Fisheries Institute. He is a steward of the First Methodist Church.

On April 9, 1930, Mr. Smoot was married to Rebecca Covington, daughter of James and Ila (Fenton) Covington, of Rockingham, N. C. They have three children: Thomas, Jr., born December 30, 1934; Benjamin Covington, born April 20, 1939, and Martha Everett, born March 14, 1943.

### CHARLES NORMAN THAGGARD

Charles Norman Thaggard was born March 6, 1908, in Marion County, Georgia, near Buena Vista, the son of James Marshall and Lula (Browning) Thaggard.

Mr. Thaggard was educated in the public schools of Georgia and in Tampa where he lived with a sister following the death of his father in 1920. When he was seventeen years old he started working at a garage and service station in Tampa. In 1927 he went to Birmingham and worked for nearly a year for a battery manufacturer, finally leaving because he preferred Florida winters to those of Birmingham.

Returning to Tampa, Mr. Thaggard went on the road as a salesman for the Defiance Spark Plug Company, of Toledo, O., covering large parts of central and southwestern Florida. He visited Fort Myers for the first time in 1930 and liked the city so well that he decided that some day he would make it his home.

Mr. Thaggard left the Defiance Spark Plug Company late in 1934 to go into business for himself and, having already selected Fort Myers as his future home, made up his mind to go into business here. So in June, 1935, he opened an auto supply store on Broadway, naming it the Norman Auto Supply Company.

In the beginning, Mr. Thaggard had only two employees. Today he has thirty and his concern is one of the largest of its kind in Florida, specializing in automotive parts but also handling marine and farming supplies, doing a wholesale business in ten surrounding counties. The concern occupies the Heverle Building on McGregor Boulevard which Mr. Thaggard purchased in 1939.

He is a member of the Chamber of Commerce and First Baptist Church.

On May 11, 1928, Mr. Thaggard was married to Fannie Viola Thompson. They have two children: Norman Jean Thaggard, born November 13, 1929, and Raymond Leon Thaggard, born January 27, 1931.

### SHELBY SHANKLIN

Shelby Shanklin was born June 6, 1888, in Lexington, Ky., the son of George S. and Lily (Shelby) Shanklin. He attended Lexington public schools and studied electrical engineering at the University of Kentucky, in Lexington, from which he was graduated in 1910.

Mr. Shanklin then joined the sales organization of the General Electric Company and for the next eight years worked in Schenectady, Philadelphia and Chicago. In 1918 he became connected with the Dravo-



CHARLES NORMAN THAGGARD

Doyle Co., manufacturers' representatives of Pittsburgh, working in the Cleveland office of that concern.

Coming to Florida for his health in 1920, Mr. Shanklin located in Clearwater and during the next five years built and sold houses in that city with his brother, Arthur P. Shanklin.

When the boom ended, Mr. Shanklin decided to try his hand at growing gladioli for the northern market. Becoming associated with H. H. Constantine, Jr., he formed Pinellas Gladiolus, Inc., and started in a small way during the winter of 1925-26. Despite the fact that they were pioneers in the industry, the two men made a success of the undertaking and gradually expanded their operations.

Cold weather during the winters of 1933-34 and 1934-35 led Mr. Shanklin to seek a more frost-free location and he was persuaded by an agricultural agent of the Seaboard railroad to look over the Iona district. Liking what he found, he purchased 210 acres along the Caloosahatchee from the Dr. Franklin Miles estate in 1935 and during the following season started operations there. Later several hundred more acres were leased and placed under cultivation. The company also grows bulbs and late spring glads on a tract near Punta Gorda.

Mr. Constantine's interest in Pinellas Gladiolus, Inc., was purchased by Mr. Shanklin shortly after the company's base of operations was moved to Fort Myers. Mr. Shanklin retired in 1946 and the company is now being operated by his son, John D. Shanklin.

On September 26, 1914, Mr. Shanklin was married to Eleanor DeRemer, of Schenectady, N. Y. They have two sons: John D. and Shelby, Jr., who is now a florist in Lexington, Ky., and a daughter, Barbara.

### EDWARD SIMPSON

Edward Simpson was born April 18, 1901, in Bartow, Fla., the son of George E. and Amana (Gwynne) Simpson. His father was born in London, England, in 1866 and came to Apopka, Fla., when sixteen years old. His mother was born in Arkansas. The family moved in 1904 to Tampa where the father engaged in banking.

After completing his junior year at Hillsborough High School in June, 1918, Mr. Simpson enlisted in the Navy and served four years as a quartermaster in the Naval Air Force, with one year in the Panama Canal Zone. He then homesteaded in Highland County, planted a grove, and proved up his 160-acre claim, which he still owns.

Moving back to Tampa, Mr. Simpson in 1923 was employed as a member of a sur-



EDWARD SIMPSON

veyor's crew by the engineering firm of Hiram McElroy. A year later he joined the Mallory Steamship Company as a delivery clerk. In 1925 he became head shipping clerk of I. W. Philips & Co., Tampa dealers in wholesale building materials. He remained with that concern seven years and then was employed as a salesman by Booker & Co., which also dealt in wholesale building materials.

George V. Booker, company president, transferred Mr. Simpson to Fort Myers in 1935 to take charge of the Fort Myers Builders Service, making him general manager and secretary-treasurer of the concern.

Desiring to gain a college education, Mr. Simpson took required examinations at Fort Myers High School and received his diploma October 1, 1947, thirty years after his high school work had been halted by World War I.

Mr. Simpson has served four years as a member of the School Board and was re-elected in 1948. He is a past president of the Kiwanis Club, past chef de garde 40 et 8, a past exalted ruler of the Elks Lodge, a director of the Florida Lumber and Mill-work Association, a member of the Fort Myers Yacht Club, Navy Club, American Legion, the Fort Myers Golf and Country Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Episcopal Church.

On June 15, 1925, Mr. Simpson was married to Laura Ruth Dutcher, of Thomasville, Ga. They have three daughters: Laura Ruth, born October 11, 1927; Mary Louise, born December 6, 1931, and Marion Dutcher, born February 5, 1935.

### JOHN O. ZIPPERER

John O. Zipperer was born August 4, 1895, at Lake Park, Ga., the son of Orin T. and Martha (Rigell) Zipperer, both natives of Georgia. He was educated in Georgia public schools.

Enlisting in the Marines Corps shortly after the entrance of the United States in World War I, Mr. Zipperer served sixteen months overseas and took part in the first All-American drive.

After the war Mr. Zipperer went to work for a wholesale florist in Philadelphia where he remained until 1926 when he came to Florida to grow asparagus plumosus ferns on a commercial scale. Establishing a farm near Sebring, his venture proved successful.

In 1931 Mr. Zipperer became associated with Rex Beach in the growing of galdioli and Easter lilies and four years later the two men became partners, with Mr. Zipperer acting as manager of the farms. In 1933

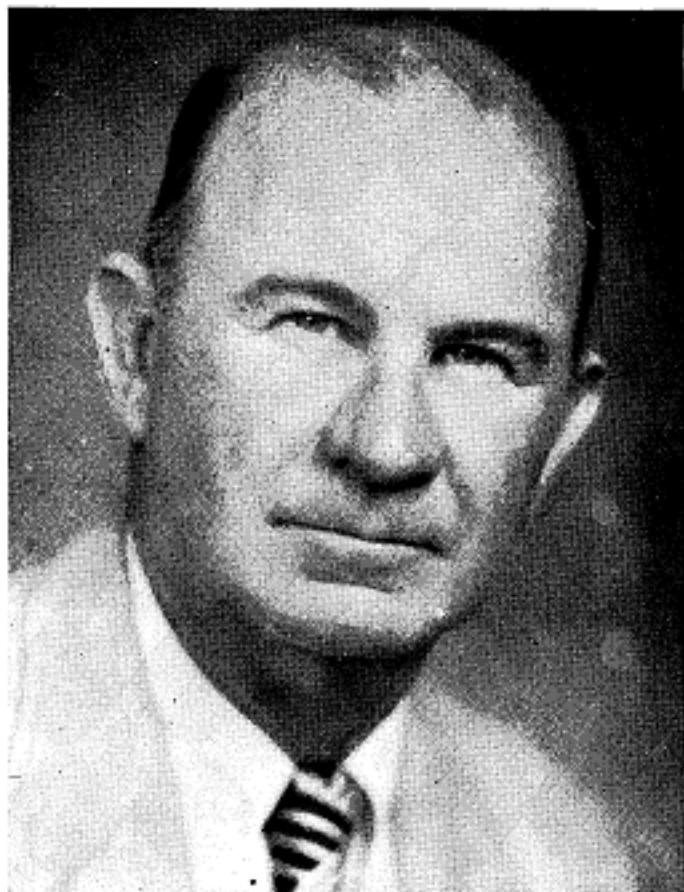
and again in 1934, cold weather badly damaged their crops and they decided to move to a section which would be warmer. After making a survey of the entire state, they decided that the Iona section offered the best advantages so they acquired land and established Rex Beach Farms, devoted exclusively to gladioli.

Mr. Zipperer and Mr. Beach continued to grow lilies at Fort Meade and in 1942, when Japanese lily bulbs were embargoed, they produced the first commercial crop ever grown in the state, obtaining 800,000 marketable bulbs.

In 1944 the partnership was dissolved and Mr. Zipperer established Zipperer Farms, now one of the largest producers of gladioli in Florida. (See Index: Gladiolus farms.)

Mr. Zipperer is a past president of the Florida Gladiolus Growers Association, and a member of the Chamber of Commerce, the Society of American Florists, New England Gladiolus Society, Florists Telegraph Delivery Association, and the Southeastern and Florida Florists association.

On July 8, 1926, Mr. Zipperer was married to Madge Burns, of Scranton, Pa. They have a son, John O., Jr., born October 20, 1932, who in 1948 was a junior in the Fort Myers High School.



JOHN O. ZIPPERER



FRED J. WESEMEYER

#### FRED J. WESEMEYER

Fred J. Wesemeyer was born February 10, 1900, in Frankfurt-Main-Hoechst, Germany, the son of Friedrich and Ann (Roos) Wesemeyer.

After attending the Frankfurt Horticultural School, Mr. Wesemeyer served an apprenticeship with his father who owns a nursery in Frankfurt and specializes in cut flowers.

Mr. Wesemeyer left Germany in 1922 and spent a year in Buenos Aires, Argentina where he was engaged in nursery work. He then went to South Orange, N. J., and for the next four years worked in nurseries in northern cities.

Coming to Florida in 1927, Mr. Wesemeyer soon afterward went into the gladiolus business with Donald Alvord, of Clearwater, founding the A. & W. Bulb Company. This concern was probably the first in Florida which employed mass production methods in the gladiolus business and within a few years had more than 200 acres under cultivation.

After the severe freeze of December, 1934, Mr. Wesemeyer and Mr. Alvord made a survey of the state to find a section with a more favorable climate and finally decided to try the Iona district. The concern

now owns 860 acres there and has approximately 500 under cultivation each season, in addition to approximately 300 at Clearwater.

Mr. Wesemeyer is in charge of production at both locations, traveling to and from Clearwater in his own airplane. On October 24, 1947, he was badly injured and narrowly escaped death when his plane crashed at Fort Myers. But he continued making his flights.

During the 1947-48 season the company suffered several severe losses. The roof of its cold storage plant in Fort Myers was blown off in the September, 1947, hurricane. Its modern packing plant and offices in Fort Myers were totally destroyed by fire on December 7, 1947, and shortly afterward another fire destroyed the offices in Clearwater and partially destroyed the packing plant. Despite these losses the company kept right on going.

On August 12, 1929, Mr. Wesemeyer was married to Mary June St. Claire in Chicago.

Mr. Wesemeyer is a past president of the Florida State Florist Association and Florida Growers Association. He is a director of the Lee County Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Elks Lodge, Fort Myers Country Club, Clearwater Yacht Club and Clearwater Country Club.



CLAUDE E. WILLIS

### CLAUDE E. WILLIS

Claude E. Willis was born February 11, 1900, at Harbor View, on Charlotte Harbor, Florida, the son of Mott A. and Maggie (Curry) Willis. His father was a native of North Carolina and his mother of Indiana.

Mr. Willis was educated in Punta Gorda schools and when seventeen years old started working for his father who had a Star Mail Route out of Punta Gorda, operated a ferry across Charlotte Harbor, and had a general store in the settlement of Charlotte Harbor. The ferry was operated until a concrete bridge over the estuary was completed in 1921.

Entering the fish business, Mr. Willis was engaged in the Punta Gorda district until he came to Fort Myers in 1935 and became associated with W. E. Bradley, owner of a fish house on the Collier dock, doing a wholesale business in salt water fish under the name of the Gulf Fish Company.

Mr. Willis bought Mr. Bradley's interest in the concern in 1937 and operated it himself until 1941 when he sold to the South Fish Company, then owned by Tom Smoot and I. W. Riggs. During the war Mr. Willis was engaged in making tents for the government in a Fort Myers plant. In 1945 he purchased an interest in the South Fish Company and has been connected with it since then, being a partner of Mr. Smoot.

In July, 1924, Mr. Willis was married to Alma Howland, daughter of Walter R. and Mattie (Purifoy) Howland, of Punta Gorda. They have two children: Vera, the wife of Thomas Marvel, and Elton Earl, who in 1948 was operating the Point Comfort Fishing Camp at Punta Rassa in partnership with Mr. Marvel.

### GEORGE HAROLD ALEXANDER

George Harold Alexander was born February 1, 1902, in Dunlap, Tenn., the son of H. M. and Sadie (Fox) Alexander. He attended Chattanooga public schools and then took a commercial course at the University of Chattanooga from which he was graduated in 1922.

Mr. Alexander then went into the real estate business with his father in Wauchula, Fla., where the family had moved six years before. In 1924 he went to Punta Gorda, first selling real estate and then going into the mercantile business. In 1928 he established a bakery, the business of which expanded so rapidly that in 1936 he found it necessary to open another bakery in Fort Myers. He operated both until 1941 when he established his main plant here.

Alexander's Baking Company, owned by Mr. Alexander, now sells wholesale in eight counties and has a fleet of ten trucks making daily deliveries. In addition to baked goods made in his own plant, he also sells Bell Bread, for which he has the agency. With A. W. D. Harris, he is the distributor for Canada Dry products and with M. W. Anderson is the distributor for other lines of products.

Mr. Alexander has been active in politics ever since he left college. He has been a member of the State Republican Committee for twenty years, has served as precinct committeeman, congressional committeeman, chairman of the congressional committee, was delegate to the National Republican Convention in 1936, 1940 and 1944, and was state campaign manager for Thomas E. Dewey in 1944 and 1948. During the Hoover administration he was active in obtaining federal projects in southwest Florida and also assisted in getting dykes around Lake Okeechobee.

Mr. Alexander is a past president (1946) and now director of the Chamber of Commerce, was president of the Red Cross drive in 1945, is a past president of the Fort Myers Round Table, is president of the Kiwanis Club, a steward in the Methodist Church, and is a member of the Masonic and Elks lodges, the Knights of Pythias, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, Fort Myers Country Club, and is vice-chairman of the Lee County Chapter Red Cross. He is also a member of the State Flood Committee.

On October 16, 1923, Mr. Alexander was married to Olive Anderson, of Chicago. They have two children: Caroline Trescott and Evelyn Gray.

#### MICHAEL HAUK

Michael Hauk was born May 3, 1890, on a farm near Warsaw, Poland, the son of Anthony and Philipina Hauk.

Coming to the United States in 1910, Mr. Hauk located in Chicago where he worked for eleven years as a tool and die maker, a trade he had learned in Poland. Finally becoming tired of city life, he came to Florida in 1921 and purchased land near Plant City.

In the beginning he specialized in growing strawberries. During the prosperous Twenties his venture was successful but when the depression struck he began to lose money. During the mid-Thirties he started raising gladioli at Plant City. Finding the climate too cold there for the flowers to be grown satisfactorily he acquired land at Palma Sola in 1939 and established the Palma Sola Flower Farm. During the following year he also planted a large tract at Ruskin. Cold weather ruined the crop.



GEORGE HAROLD ALEXANDER

Seeking a more frost-proof area, Mr. Hauk came to Fort Myers in the fall of 1940 and leased 115 acres in the Iona district. He had little money but he did have a strong determination to succeed—and a fine stock of bulbs. His achievements since then have made history in the gladiolus industry. By 1948 he had built up one of the largest gladiolus farms in the world. He had more than 350 acres in glads and, in addition, had more than 250 acres in potatoes. (See Index: Gladiolus Industry.)

On July 27, 1912, Mr. Hauk was married in Chicago to Lena Singer, who was born in Saxony, Germany. They have one son, George Michael, born April 1, 1914, who served two and one-half years in the Army during World War II and is now associated with his father in Palma Sola Flower Farm.

#### EDWARD WILLIAM SMITH

Edward William Smith was born December 4, 1904, in Barbourville, Knox County, Ky., the son of Madison and Tressie (Gray) Smith, both natives of Kentucky. He was graduated from the Barbourville High School and later attended Union College.

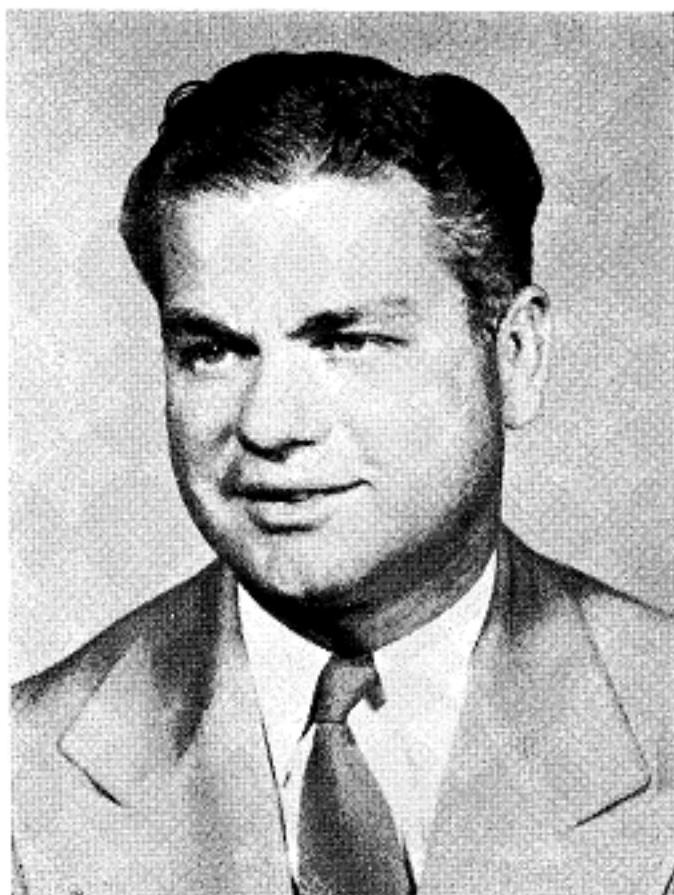
In 1924 he started working in the engineering department of the Kentucky State Highway Department. On June 12, 1925, he was married to Miss Frances

Durham, of Pineville, Ky., and went to Miami on his honeymoon. Liking the city, he decided to remain and took a job as a draftsman for the Daniel E. Clune Engineering Co.

A year later Mr. Smith started to work for the Florida Power & Light Co. as a draftsman in the engineering department. In 1928 he was sent to West Palm Beach as district representative and soon was made eastern division power salesman. From West Palm Beach he was transferred to Okeechobee to serve as manager of the company's power and ice plants and served there from 1929 to 1932 when he was again transferred to Cocoa to serve as district manager. He remained at Cocoa until the fall of 1941 when he was sent to Fort Myers as district manager over a territory comprising Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach, Naples, LaBelle and all intervening areas. On October 8, 1948, he was appointed district manager of the Fort Lauderdale area and assumed his new duties immediately.

During World War II Mr. Smith served as post co-ordinator of the Utilities War-time Aid Program for the 4th Service Command and was cited for his services on April 10, 1946, by the Secretary of War. He was also cited by the Secretary of the Treasury for his work in the sale of war bonds.

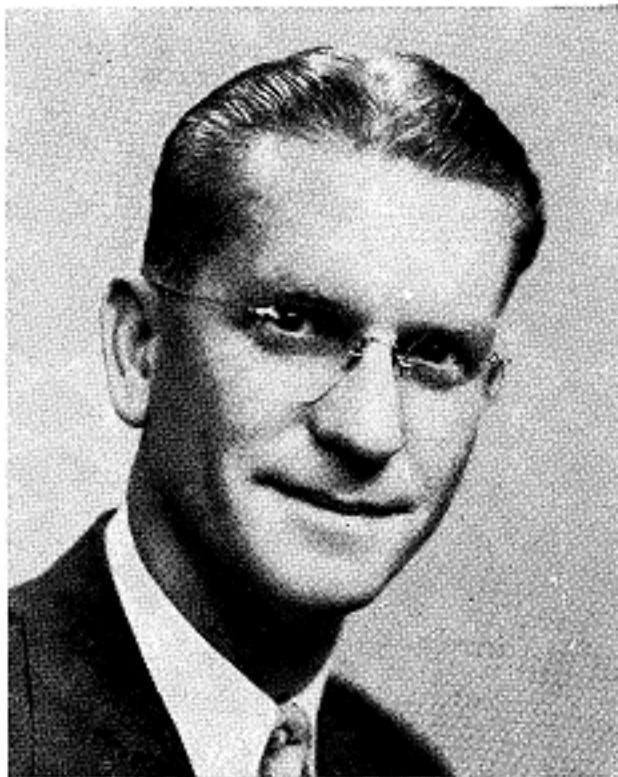
Mr. Smith is a past director and treasurer of the Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce, past exalted ruler of the Fort Myers and Cocoa lodges of the Elks, and past president of the Cocoa Rotary Club. He was the first president and is now director of the Caloosahatchee Conservation Club. He is



LUCIAN F. THOMAS

a member of the Masonic Lodge, Fort Myers Rotary Club, and First Baptist Church.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith have two children: Edward William, Jr., born April 26, 1926, and in 1948 a senior at Lynchburg College, Lynchburg, Va., and Sandra Faye, in 1948 a junior at Fort Myers High School.



EDWARD WILLIAM SMITH

#### LUCIAN F. THOMAS

Lucian F. Thomas was born February 29, 1908, in Archer, Fla., the son of John Newn and Della (Wynn) Thomas, both natives of Florida of Scotch-Irish descent. He attended primary school in Sampson City and high school in Starke until the death of his father in 1923 when he started working on a farm.

In 1926, Mr. Thomas went to Jacksonville, taking a job with the Railway Express Company where he remained seven years. Desiring to see more of the country, he then joined Dunlap Shows and danced in vaudeville in almost every state east of the Rockies from 1933 to 1936.

Returning to Florida, Mr. Thomas worked a year as construction foreman for the H. E. Wolfe Construction Company of St. Augustine and then became a salesman for Downtown Oldsmobile, of Jacksonville. For four successive years he was in the first, second or third division in southeastern sales.

Coming to Fort Myers in 1941, Mr. Thomas started farming in a small way in the Iona district, raising egg plants, cucumbers, squash and peppers. Two years later he also began raising gladiolus. In 1948 he had approximately 200 acres under cultivation, 75 in glads and 125 in truck.

In 1943 Mr. Thomas joined with J. H. Hayne and formed the Hayne & Thomas Weld-Rite Welding Works, becoming president of the corporation. He also is president of Thomas & Cline, Inc., automotive shop. He is a member of the Chamber of Commerce, Junior Chamber of Commerce, and Lions Club.

On February 26, 1938, Mr. Thomas was married to Bella Janet Bain, daughter of Donald and Emma Bain, pioneer family of the Iona section. They have four children: Lucian, Jr., born August 6, 1939; Donna, born October 23, 1940; John Newn, born April 14, 1944, and Janet, born July 16, 1947.

#### NORMAN M. COX

Norman M. Cox was born August 3, 1910, in Evansville, Ind., the son of M. F. and Mildred (Hooper) Cox. He attended Evansville public schools and was graduated from high school in 1929. In high school he won letters in football, track, basketball and golf.

After finishing high school, Mr. Cox was connected with the Inter-State Airlines, Inc., at Tennessee Sky Harbor, near Murfreesboro.

In 1931 Mr. Cox went on the road as a salesman for George Koch Sons, Inc., a concern which sold florist supplies. Six years later he was named sales manager of the Denver Wholesale Florist Company, of Denver, Col.

Having become acquainted with florists in all parts of the country, Mr. Cox decided in 1941 that a profitable business could be developed by selling gladioli to them on a brokerage basis and in the fall of 1941 came to Fort Myers and established the firm of Norman Cox & Co., becoming one of the pioneer gladiolus brokers in Florida. He started shipping flowers to his personal acquaintances in the florist industry and later he developed a sales organization which now ships to almost every state east of the Rockies. He operated on a strictly brokerage basis in the beginning but now has an extensive farming system from which he draws the major part of his supply.

Mr. Cox was one of the founders and the first president of the Florida Gladiolus Brokers Association. He is the president of Gulf Coast Farms, Inc., and also of Airfresh Flowers, Inc.



NORMAN M. COX

On April 20, 1935, Mr. Cox was married to Mildred C. Dolis, of St. Louis. They have three children: Lyn Mary, born September 8, 1937; Nancy Ann, born July 7, 1941, and Janine, born February 21, 1946.

#### GEORGE W. THOMPSON

George W. Thompson was born April 24, 1891, in Chicago, the son of George W. and Mary Eleanor (Waring) Thompson. He attended Chicago public schools and the School of Business of the University of Chicago.

In 1913 Mr. Thompson started working for an investment banking house in Chicago. Eight years later he organized the G. W. Thompson Company which during later years financed and operated telephone systems all over the country.

With E. E. Patterson, of Chicago, Mr. Thompson in 1942 bought the Inter-County Telephone & Telegraph Company from the Collier interests.

Mr. Thompson is vice-president and director of the Illinois Allied Telephone Company, of Princeton, Ill., and vice-president and director of the Pioneer Telephone Company, of St. Paul, Minn. He formerly was associated with many other telephone companies and banks.

On June 14, 1913, Mr. Thompson was married to Katherine Coburn, of Chicago. They have a daughter, Katherine, who is now the wife of George W. Fulton.

### GEORGE SANDERS

George Sanders was born January 24, 1914, in Charleston, S. C., the son of Julius Henry and Abigail (Hair) Sanders, both natives of South Carolina. In 1916 the family moved to Blackville, S. C., and eight years later to Lakeland, Fla.

Mr. Sanders attended primary school in Blackville and was graduated from Lakeland high school in 1931. He then studied two years at the University of Florida but quit after his sophomore year to go into the feed, seed and fertilizer business with his brother-in-law, J. C. Williams, opening the Service Feed Store in Lakeland.

In 1937 Mr. Sanders sold his interest in the feed store and became associated with W. O. Hodges, of Plant City, in the produce business, first buying strawberries in the Lakeland district and later all kinds of winter vegetables. Mr. Sanders has had close business connections with Mr. Hodges ever since.

Mr. Sanders came to Fort Myers to live in 1942 and has made this city his headquarters since then. His business operations have become widely extended and he now buys produce in wholesale quantities in all parts of Florida and ships to every state in the Union. To maintain his contacts with farms and markets he travels in his own airplane, having been granted a private pilot's license in 1943.



GEORGE SANDERS



WILLIAM A. GUESS

Late in 1946 Mr. Sanders went into the gladiolus business, joining with Gerald Moody to form the Florida Gladiola Company.

Mr. Sanders is a member of the First Baptist Church.

On November 5, 1937, he was married to Mary Jo Clayton, daughter of Clanton Mallory and Cora Grace (Sullivan) Clayton, of Lakeland. They have a son, George Andrew Sanders, born April 26, 1941, in Lakeland.

### WILLIAM A. GUESS

William A. Guess was born November 5, 1906, in Abbeville, S. C., the son of William G. and Myrtle (Hough) Guess, both natives of North Carolina.

Reared in Raleigh, N. C., Mr. Guess attended schools there and also the Porter Military Academy in Charleston, S. C. On November 5, 1924, he became connected with the North Carolina Inspection and Rating Bureau of the Southeastern Underwriters Association and remained with that organization until 1930.

From 1930 until 1939 he was special agent of the Northwestern Mutual Fire Association with offices in Atlanta. He then became a special agent of the Merrimac Mutual Fire Insurance Company, traveling

in North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

In September, 1944, Mr. Guess located in Fort Myers, establishing the local agency business of Underwriters, Inc., of which he is president and Harry Brower secretary and treasurer.

Mr. Guess is a member of the Kiwanis Club and the Episcopal Church.

His father, who was with the Seaboard railroad for forty-eight years, retired in July, 1947, and is now living in Fort Myers.

While on one of his business trips to Fort Myers, Mr. Guess met and was later married to Marjorie Longbrake, daughter of Dr. G. A. and Jennie (Nelson) Longbrake, natives of Waynesville and Galesburg, Ill., respectively. Dr. Longbrake was a physician and surgeon in Galesburg until 1919 when he came to Fort Myers where he took up his residence and practice.

Mr. and Mrs. Guess have three children: Dianne Cantrell Guess, age 19, a student in 1948 at St. Mary's School in Raleigh, N. C.; William Longbrake (Chip) Guess, born May 20, 1945, and Marjorie Suzanne, born November 5, 1948.

#### GEORGE C. ELVEY

George C. Elvey was born March 11, 1915, in McConnellsburg, Pa., the son of George B. and Hester (Stevens) Elvey, both natives of Pennsylvania. He was graduated from McConnellsburg high school in 1932 and then studied aeronautical engineering for two years at Columbus University, in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Elvey started working in 1934 for the Pennsylvania State Forestry Service, first being assigned to telephone maintenance service in the Allegheny National Park and later to experimental work in Canada. He became office manager of National Films Distributors in Washington, D. C., in 1936. He remained there two years and then was employed for three years by the Pennsylvania Greyhound Lines.

On August 26, 1941, Mr. Elvey enlisted in the Army Air Corps, going in as a sergeant on flight status. In April, 1943, he was commissioned as a lieutenant, and two years later was sent to the southwest Pacific. While in the States he served as flight instructor at twelve air bases and gunnery schools in Virginia, Mississippi, Louisiana, California, Arizona and Florida. After being assigned overseas he served in New Guinea, Netherlands East Indies, Tacloban and Luzon in the Philippines, Ie Shima in the Ryukyu Group, on the China Coast and in Japan, and was awarded five battle stars. He came back to the States on September 17, 1945, and was placed on inactive status from Camp Aterbury, Ind., November 15, 1945.



GEORGE C. ELVEY

Mr. Elvey then made his home in Fort Myers and on January 21, 1946, went into the automobile business at 1026 Bay Street, having the Packard-Hudson agency. In February, 1948, he sold the Packard agency and on May 1, 1948, opened in his new location at 1959 Lee Street in one of the most modernly equipped garages in southwest Florida, with 11,000 square feet under roof and 16,500 square feet for parking and used car lot. He has the Crosley as well as the Hudson agency in the Fort Myers territory.

Mr. Elvey is a member of Tropical Lodge No. 56, F.&A.M., Lake Worth Consistory, and Egypt Temple Shrine, Tampa. He also is a member of the Kiwanis Club, Junior Chamber of Commerce, and the Caloosahatchee Conservation Club.

On June 1, 1943, Mr. Elvey was married to Mary Francis Whisnant, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Baker Whisnant. They have two children: Baker W., born March 11, 1944, and Sara Joy, born February 25, 1947.

#### GEORGE M. COX

George M. Cox was born July 26, 1877, in Cooperston, Ill., the son of James A. and Martha (Pettigrew) Cox, both natives of Illinois. His father was a pioneer merchant of Cooperstown where he lived all his life.

Mr. Cox lived on a farm until he was seventeen and then went on the road as a salesman, selling paint to railroads, packing houses, lumber mills and industrial concerns of all kinds in almost every part of the United States and Canada.

In 1919 Mr. Cox went to New Orleans and established the brokerage firm of George M. Cox, Inc., the business of which was confined largely to the southeastern states. He retired in 1929 but a year later found it necessary to take over the A. J. Higgins boat yard in New Orleans. He then organized the G. M. Cox Shipyard, Inc. During World War II this concern constructed many boats for the Navy and at the peak of production employed more than a thousand men.

In 1945 Mr. Cox retired again. He had been coming to Florida almost every winter since he was a boy and was acquainted with every section of the state. Preferring the West Coast, he decided to make his home on Sanibel Island but when he found that the old Floweree home on First Street was for sale, he purchased it and has lived there ever since. The home, constructed in 1899, is still one of the show places of Fort Myers.

Mr. Cox formerly was active in many business and trade organizations. He is a Mason, an Odd Fellow, an Elk and a Knight of Pythias. His one daughter, Mrs. Georgia Lee French, now deceased, had two children: George M. C. French and Mrs. Frimie French Persian. He has two grandchildren: Libbie Lee French and George John Persian.



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